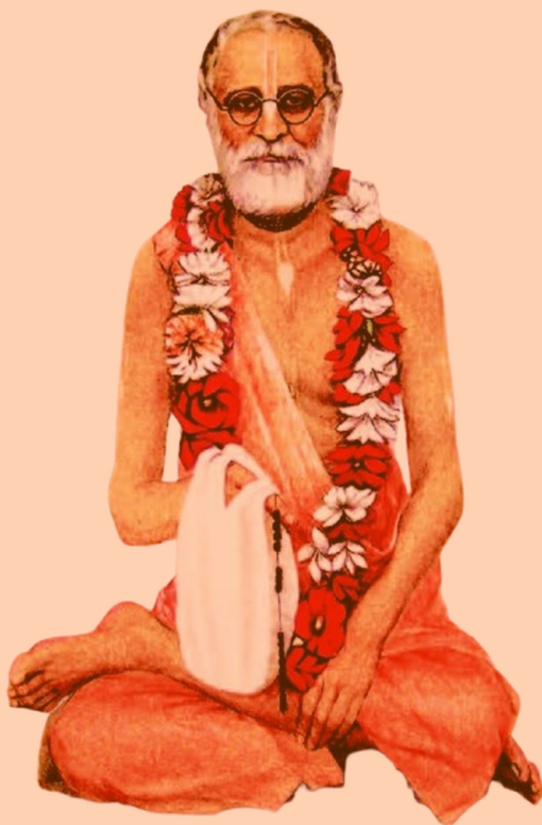


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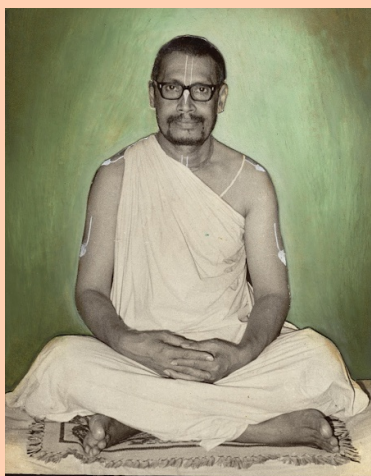
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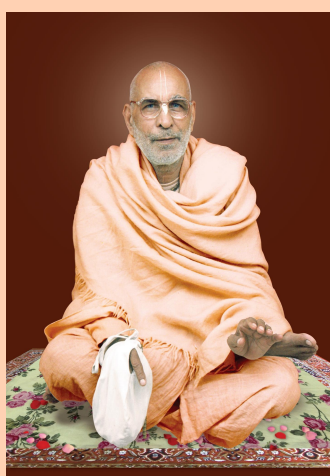
*Nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om
viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata*
Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti-prajñāna
Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja



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The Disappearance Day of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda

(From *Śrī Prabandhāvalī*,
A Collection of Devotional Essays
by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja)

Today is the anniversary of the day of separation from *nitya-līlā praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata* Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda. It is the day of *pañcamī*, and he also appeared on *pañcamī*. He took birth in the home of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, who is an eternal associate of both Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Just as the sage Bhagīratha brought the Gaṅgā to this world, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was the great personality who brought the current of *bhakti* to this world in the modern era. When the so-called *gosvāmīs* were making a business out of *bhakti* while engaging in varieties of worldly enjoyment, when in the name of Mahāprabhu so many kinds of bogus philosophies were prevalent, such as *sakhī-bekī*, *smārta-jāti*, *sahajiyā*, etc. — at that time Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura came. After that, Prabhupāda appeared in the form of his son, Bimalā Prasāda. If these two great personalities had not appeared, then *śuddha-bhakti* would not exist in the world today. And from the time that they disappeared, society began reverting back to its previous condition. At first there were thirteen known *sahajiyā* cults, then our Guru Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī, counted thirty-nine. And how many there are now, no one knows.

I am also seeing how things are gradually changing. We saw how renounced the devotees were before. For instance, we never used to see socks on the feet of any Vaiṣṇava, and we never saw devotees wearing such sweaters and *cādaras* as we do now. They only wore the bare necessities of clothing and a cheap blanket, even as they attended *maṅgala-ārati* in the morning cold. It is only

after the disappearance of Prabhupāda that devotees can be seen to wear these other things. They would live with such simplicity, eating only *śāka-sabji*, rice and a thin dahl, but in comparison to them, just look at the way we are living! And I speak for myself also — their knowledge, their renunciation and their spiritual conception were of such a high standard that in comparison to them we are so inferior.

The period between Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was an age of darkness for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. Living at that time were some real Vaiṣṇavas who performed real *bhajana*, but mostly, just as we still see sometimes today, the so-called Vaiṣṇavas only performed rituals for wages. When someone would die, people would call the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *bābājīs*, who would come and chant some ceremonial *kīrtana* and perform other rituals for wages. And there was so much misconduct in their behaviour. Seeing this, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura thought, “These people are Vaiṣṇavas? The conception of Mahāprabhu has completely vanished. What can be done?” He was very worried. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura endeavoured to his utmost, but changes did not come about in his lifetime to the degree that he would have liked. He went from town to town and village to village inaugurating the *nāma-haṭṭa*. In each village he would assemble four or five of the religious men, form a committee and hold programmes for *harināma-kīrtana* on Sundays. Gradually it spread from one village to the next, but overall his preaching was limited to Navadvīpa, Calcutta and the rest of Bengal.

He published the magazine *Sajjana-toṣaṇī*, and through its medium he gradually published *ŚrīCaitanya-caritāmṛta* and other books in instalments. He made a circle of devotees, and also revealed Navadvīpa-dhāma through his writings, although the scholars of society and the *sahajiyās* didn’t accept his ideology. Then Prabhupāda appeared in Purī. Because Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was a

district magistrate, he would be transferred here and there, but he would always keep *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* with him and explain them to his son. Prabhupāda received so much instruction from him, but we should understand that Prabhupāda is an eternally liberated soul; there was no one in the world like him. Without being educated in school or college he learned all subjects very quickly and became a great scholar in Sanskrit. His English was so high that even professors of English could not understand it. I have been told by some learned Western devotees that when reading his *Brahma-saṁhitā*, they must repeatedly consult the dictionary. And his Bengali was also of such a high standard that even eminent scholars found it difficult to follow. He said that spiritual language should be like that; it shouldn't be so simple to understand. As one progresses spiritually by remaining in the company of Vaiṣṇavas, he will be able to understand spiritual vernacular.

At the age of seven or eight, Prabhupāda began worshipping a deity of Kūrmadeva, and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura gave him the *mahā-mantra* and other *mantras* for his *pūjā*. At the age of eighteen, all of the scholars of astronomy in Bengal gave him the title “Sarasvatī”. After that he attended college but quarrelled with the professors, saying, “Will I learn from you, or teach you?” When he abandoned his studies, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and other family members became concerned, so they took him to Purī where he began studying at Sātāsana Āśrama, which is where Svarūpa Dāmodara and Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī had lived. Vaiṣṇavas used to regularly meet there, and now Śrīla Siddhāntī Mahārāja has a *maṭha* at that very place. There Prabhupāda began giving readings from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Present there were some *bābājīs* who considered themselves *rasika*, and when they heard Prabhupāda's explanations, they became inimical to him. Seeing this, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura took him away from there and had him begin teaching the son of the king of

Tripura.

Prabhupāda had a great library of Vaiṣṇava literature, and having read through it thoroughly, he began teaching the son of the king in such a way that the boy accepted a chanting *mālā* and began wearing *tilaka*. He became detached from the world, and gradually, hearing *hari-kathā* became his sole interest. Seeing this, the queen became very annoyed and said to the king, “This boy will become useless! Then, after your demise, what will happen? Who will make offerings to our departed souls? He will become a renunciate, and everything will be ruined! Quickly get rid of this teacher. Give him four hundred rupees to go — we don’t need money, we need a son!” That was approximately one hundred years ago, so you can imagine how much four hundred rupees was worth then. The queen put so much pressure on her husband that in the end he approached Prabhupāda and very humbly said, “It is a matter of great unhappiness that our family members are not in favour of you; they are afraid that the boy will take up *bhakti* and become a renunciate. I consider that it has been our great good fortune to have met a person like you and had our son educated by you, but the others don’t understand.” The king approached Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and offered the money to him, but without accepting it they left there.

Then Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura started a homeopathic shop. When the shop was unsuccessful, he thought, “I was not made to run a shop anyway,” and he went and purchased some land in Māyāpura. After locating the birthplace of Mahāprabhu, he installed deities there of Gaura, Viṣṇupriyā and Lakṣmīpriyā, as well as small Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *mūrtis*. After Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s disappearance, Prabhupāda was determined to follow the Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā* that his father had written, and to attract people he invited great *kīrtana* performers to attend. He set up a large tent, thousands of people came for the *parikramā*, and there the *kathā* of *śuddha-*

bhagavad-bhakti commenced.

Gradually, qualified youths of only sixteen, seventeen and eighteen years, whose hearts were soft and pure, came forward, and Prabhupāda made them into *brahmacārīs* and *sannyāsīs*. With great ease he was able to train them, but those who were over fifty years old, like parrots could not be taught anything new. Then devotees like our Guru Mahārāja, Bon Mahārāja, Bhakti Pradīpa Tīrtha Mahārāja, Bhakti Vilāsa Tīrtha Mahārāja, Araṇya Mahārāja and Narahari Prabhu came. In the beginning there in Māyāpura, Narahari Prabhu would offer *ārati* while Prabhupāda played the hand-held gong, and gradually the preaching started. The convention of *tridaṇḍa-sannyāsa* was established, and the result is that today the name and conception of Caitanya Mahāprabhu are being vigorously preached. Within eleven years, from 1926–37, preaching was spread everywhere, but before that, so much time was spent in merely setting the foundation. Prabhupāda published many magazines — daily, weekly, monthly — in the Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi, Orissan, English and Assamese languages, and very easily we have all inherited the fruit of his endeavour. He established the Gauḍīya line very strictly with great endeavour, and there were so many difficulties in his preaching campaign that we cannot even imagine them. There was so much opposition to Prabhupāda's preaching at that time that his disciples were not even allowed to enter the *mandiras* in Vṛndāvana or Navadvīpa.

Prabhupāda began culturing the creeper of devotion by cutting off all of the unnecessary branches and sub-branches. How? First of all he revised the *guru-paramparā*. He said that we are of Mahāprabhu's line, and he removed the names of those who were not fully perfected. After establishing the names of Brahmā, Nārada and Vyāsa, he went straight to Madhva. Prabhupāda accepted the names of those from whom the people of this world would get the most benefit, and mostly they were *brahmacārīs*. For the

most part he didn't accept the names of those who had been *grhasthas* for a long time. After Madhva, he recognised some special personalities, and then he went to the name of Mādhavendra Purī. Everyone accepts him, and then from him there is Īśvara Purī, Svarūpa Dāmodara, the Six Gosvāmīs, and then Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī. At this point some had divided into the lines of Nityānanda Prabhu, Advaita Ācārya, Gadādhara Paṇḍita, Vakreśvara Paṇḍita, Lokanātha Gosvāmī and others, but Prabhupāda said, "We accept in our line those who are fully perfected souls, who know the correct *siddhānta* and who are *rasika*, wherever they are." In this way all of the various lines were represented in our *paramparā* in one place or another.

There are so many lines of disciplic succession, but Prabhupāda said that we will recognise the *guru-paramparā*, not the disciplic succession. The *guru-paramparā* is composed solely of those who were *bhāgavata-gurus*, even if they made no disciples and there is therefore no direct disciplic line coming from them. Some of them may not have initiated any disciples at all, but still they are *jagad-gurus*. In this way, with all-pervading vision he collected all the *mahājanas* and made what is known as the *bhāgavata-paramparā* or *guru-paramparā*.

After the departure of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, so many familial disciplic lines arose, but Prabhupāda ignored them and gave recognition to Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, and then Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī. He accepted only those in whom he detected the real spiritual *siddhānta*. Simply receiving the *mantra* in one's ear and wearing a *dhotī* or other cloth given by the *guru* does not qualify one as the *guru's* successor. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura did not receive any *mantra* from Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, so how was he his disciple? He was a disciple of his conception: his feelings towards Kṛṣṇa, his conception of *rasa* and his conception of *tattva*. This is a disciple. Most people can't understand this, but being able to see with such insight, Prabhupāda

declared this to be our line. Gaura-kiśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja was also not an initiated disciple of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, but he embraced all of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's sentiments and conceptions, and due to this his name appears next in the succession. At this point, all of the *bābājīs* said, "Whose disciple is Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī? Who gave him *sannyāsa*? Why doesn't he wear the same cloth as Sanātana Gosvāmī did? In our *sampradāya*, after Nityānanda Prabhu and Svarūpa Dāmodara, everyone wore white cloth, but we see that he wears saffron cloth and has accepted a *daṇḍa*. How can he do this?" But what relation does wearing either orange or white cloth have with *bhakti*? Is there any relation?

***kibā vipra, kibā nyāsī, śūdra kene naya
yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei 'guru' haya***

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta
(Madhya-līlā 8.128)

Whether one is a *brāhmaṇa*, a *sannyāsī* or a *sūdra*, if he knows *kṛṣṇa-tattva*, then he is a *guru*, so what to speak of being a Vaiṣṇava? Prabhupāda was thinking, "We are not qualified to accept the dress that was worn by such great personalities as Rūpa, Sanātana, Jīva and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja. We will remain in the ordinary dress of *sannyāsīs* and will not accept the dress of *paramahansa-bābājīs*. Remaining within the *varṇāśrama* system as *brahmacārīs* and *sannyāsīs*, we will keep the ideal of that *paramahansa* dress above our heads. Otherwise, if we accept that dress and commit sinful activities, it will be *aparādha* at the feet of Rūpa and Sanātana." Some *bābājīs* criticised him for training *brahmacārīs* and giving them the sacred thread, but our Guru Mahārāja said that those *bābājīs* were all fools, like animals. They wore *paramahansa* dress and gave the elevated *gopī-mantra* to anyone and everyone who came, yet Prabhupāda was only training *brahmacārīs* and giving them instructions on how to control the senses — so which is correct? First

Prabhupāda wanted us to understand what is *siddhānta*, i.e. *jīva-tattva*, *māyā-tattva* and *bhagavat-tattva*, and how to avoid *māyā* in the forms of *kanaka* (wealth), *kāminī* (women) and *pratiṣṭhā* (prestige) — these are the beginning instructions. *Gopī-bhāva* is very elevated; first we must understand that “I am *kṛṣṇa-dāsa*” and begin taking *harināma*. But these *bābājīs* immediately give their conception of *gopī-bhāva* to whoever approaches them; then they all chant “I am a *gopī*, I am a *gopī*” and in this way create a disturbance in society.

Every morning in our *maṭha* we sing the song in which Prabhupāda established the *bhāgavata-paramparā*: *kṛṣṇahaitecatur-mukha*... In his composing of this song, he accepted all of the great, perfected personalities from different lines and declared, “This is the line of Gaura.” If Prabhupāda had not come, then today would the name of Mahāprabhu and talks from *Bhagavad-gītā* and *ŚrīmadBhāgavatam* be found anywhere? Here in Mathurā, in Vraja and everywhere else, *gaura-kīrtana* and *hari-kathā* are still going on and have not vanished. Therefore the world will forever remain indebted to Prabhupāda for his preaching. He never approached wealthy people, but he would take one *paisā* from each person he met. And our Guru Mahārāja did the same. Although he was from a wealthy family, he would take a wooden box with a slot in it into the market and also onto the trains, trams and buses. He would speak with people from all classes, and in this way the preaching spread in all directions. We should also engage in such a pure form of preaching, and not just remain idle after hearing this. As if giving an injection, you should all encourage others to start taking *harināma* and hearing this conception, whether you are a man or lady, married or unmarried. And don’t think that because one is not educated he cannot do it. Did Haridāsa Ṭhākura have any college degree? Did Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī and others? But their activities were first class, and their conceptions were extremely high.

We are regularly hearing *tattva* from scriptures such as *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, but how will others also get the opportunity to hear it? After hearing it we should take it to many other people, and this is the duty of each and every one of us. With great love we should take *harināma* and encourage others to chant it. We should hear *siddhānta* ourselves and then help others to understand it; that will give Prabhupāda great pleasure. To the very end of his life Prabhupāda said, “We are mere labourers; we are the peons of *bhagavat-kathā*.” He never made himself a permanent living situation in an opulent temple, but always kept moving. These days we do things a little differently, but we should always try to follow not only Prabhupāda’s philosophical conception but the ideal he showed through his own behaviour as well.

These ideas serve as the very foundation of *bhakti*, and if this foundation is not established, then we will fall from hearing the higher levels of *kathā*. For instance, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has written a song entitled *Vibhāvarī Śeṣa*, which includes lines such as:

***yāmuna-jīvana, keli-parāyaṇa,
mānasa-candra-cakora
nāma-sudhā-rasa, gāo kṛṣṇa-yaśa,
rākho vacana mana mora***

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the life of the Yamunā, He is always engaged in amorous pastimes and He is the moon of the *gopīs*’ hearts. Sing the glories of He whose name is pure *rasa* — O mind, always remember these words.

In our *maṭha* we sing this every day, and there is certainly some benefit in it, but do we understand the complete *bhāva* contained within it? Nothing remains outside these lines — not the *rāsa-līlā*, not the *Bhramara-gīta*, not the *Veṇu-gīta*, nothing. Everything is there, and all of the previous lines of this song are similarly saturated with both *rasa* and *tattva*. *Phula-śara-yojakakāma* — what is the meaning? The complete *kāma-gāyatrī* has come

here. *Śara* means an arrow, an arrow of *kāma* (desire) which Kṛṣṇa places on His bow. How many of these arrows does Kṛṣṇa have? Five: His sidelong glances and His eyebrows, cheeks, nose and smile. So tell me, is there anything remaining outside these lines?

Helping the people of the world to understand these topics is the real task of the *guru-paramparā* — those who are conversant with *rasa*, the *dīkṣā*- and *śikṣā-gurus*. If we examine one line of this song after another, then for so many days so many lectures could be given, and our hearts would become full of *rasa* and divine bliss upon hearing their full meaning. So much *bhāva* has been put into each word by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, and it is the same with the compositions of Narottama Ṭhākura and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura. To understand what our *ācāryas* have given, great intelligence and *bhāva* are required. And if we have such a *bhāva* in our hearts by which we can understand the poetry and the special characteristics of *ācāryas* like Prabhupāda, then wherever we may go, it will always remain with us.

In explaining the line *paraṁvijayateśrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam* from the first verse of Mahāprabhu's *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, Prabhupāda wrote that this is the Gauḍīya Maṭha's mode of worship. There are three stages: the beginning stage of *sādhana*, the intermediate stage of *bhāva*, and the final attainment produced by that *bhāva*, which is called *prema*. *Sādhana* is that practice by which *śuddha-sattva-bhāva* arises, and if it does not arise, what one is practising cannot be called *sādhana*. We can all examine ourselves and see if we are practising the *sādhana* that makes *bhāva* arise or not. Are the symptoms there, or not? We may not even have the proper aim in our *sādhana*. If someone is striking a match, what is his aim? To obtain a flame; and if after striking one match a flame is not obtained, then he will take another match and try again. Our endeavour to reach the *sādhya* (final attainment) through the practice of *sādhana* is like that.

Kṣud-anuvṛtti (spiritual “hunger”), *tuṣṭi* (satisfaction) and *puṣṭi* (strength) — these three things should appear, and if they don’t, then we are not really practising *sādhana* and cannot be called real *sādhakas*. Whatever we do should be done with this vision: “By performing this activity, *bhāva* for Kṛṣṇa will arise.” Is the match producing a flame or not? If we see that our *sādhana* is producing attachment for material results such as *pratiṣṭhā*, then we are moving in the wrong direction. Therefore we should understand this point well: the sole aim of *kīrtana* is to make *bhāva* arise.

Ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam: in our practice of *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, have our minds become purified or not? Are our minds going towards wealth, material enjoyment and prestige? Do we consider material enjoyment to be poisonous or favourable to us? Material enjoyment is poison. Haridāsa Ṭhākura was taking *harināma* in a solitary place when a very beautiful woman approached him and said, “Prabhu, you will no longer have to cook for yourself. You won’t have to fetch water, and I will also serve your *tulasī* plant. You can just chant *harināma* all day and I will perform all of your tasks. And if you become fatigued, I will massage your feet.” But did Haridāsa Ṭhākura accept her?

All types of material enjoyment should be understood to be poison, whether one is a man or a woman. If we consider things like luxurious food and accommodation to be favourable to us, then the mirror of the mind will not be cleansed and the reflection of one’s own spiritual form will not be visible. The mirror should be made pure; there should be no dust or anything on it. We should be able to see what is our illusory body, what is our spiritual body and what all of our faults are; but it is our great misfortune that instead we only see others’ faults. The first type of contamination affecting our minds is thinking that we are the material body. We are eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa, but the most prevalent dust on the mirror of the mind is thinking that we are the material body.

Endeavouring for the happiness of the body is dust on the mirror, or contamination on our minds.

There are so many *anarthas*: *svarūpa-bhrama* (bewilderment concerning one's actual form and nature), *asaṭ-ṭṛṣṇā* (desire for temporary things), *hrdaya-daurbalya* (weakness of heart) and *aparādha* (offences). Besides these, described in Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's *Mādhurya-kādambinī*, are *utsāha-mayī* (false confidence), *ghana-taralā* (sporadic endeavour), *vyūḍha-vikalpā* (indecision), *viṣaya-saṅgarā* (combat with the senses), *niyamākṣamā* (inability to uphold vows) and *taraṅga-raṅgiṇī* (delighting in the material facilities produced by devotion).

Then there are four types of *aparādha*: *duṣkṛtoṭtha* (arising from previous sins), *sukṛtoṭtha* (arising from previous piety), *aparādhotoṭtha* (arising from offences in chanting) and *bhaktyuṭtha* (arising from imperfect service). When all of these are eradicated, then our real selves, the *ātmā*, will reflect in the mirror of the mind; but for now our vision is distorted. We consider the pain and happiness of the material body to be our own, and our worldly relations and worldly loss and gain to be related to our very selves. *Bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇaṁ*: this is the forest fire of material existence in which we are time and again taking birth.

When the mirror of the mind is purified, then this great fire will be extinguished and we will progress along the path of *sādhana* for *uttama-bhakti*, that devotion which is free from any tendencies towards *karma* or *jṣāna*. That devotion will be *kleśa-ghnī*, that which burns away so many types of difficulties. It will not happen all at once, but gradually. First there is *śraddhā*, then *niṣṭhā*, and then we will move towards *ruci* and *āsakti* when our *anarthas* will have been mostly eradicated. However, those *anarthas* may still exist in root form. One may shave his head, but has even one hair completely disappeared? Its roots are

still there, and hair will again appear after a couple of days. In the same way, when we have reached the stage of *āsakti*, only the roots of *anarthas* will remain; externally they will not be visible. If a favourable environment is given to them — that is, if we keep bad company or offend a Vaiṣṇava — then they will reappear. But upon reaching the stage of *bhāva*, they will be finished forever.

Then there is *śubhadā*, which is of many varieties. In the worldly sense, *śubha* means having wealth, good progeny, position, fame and knowledge, and keeping the body healthy so that the effects of old age will not come prematurely. But what is real *śubha*? Having *ruci* for the name and *līlā-kathā* of Bhagavān and for the limbs of *bhagavad-bhajana-sādhana*. Having eagerness for these things is *śubha*, and that *śubha* is the lotus flower described by the words *śreyaḥ-kairava-candrikā-vitarāṇam*. If the rays of the moon fall upon it, it will bloom purely and without blemishes. How will such pure *bhakti* arise in the heart? The *śakti* of *harināma* is like the rays of the moon which make the lotus of the heart gradually bloom, taking it through the stages of *niṣṭhā*, *ruci*, *āsakti* and *bhāva*. When it fully blossoms, that is the stage of *prema*. But for the *śakti* of *harināma* to act in this way, our interest must be drawn away from material life. In the same way as two swords will not remain together in one scabbard, *māyā* and *bhakti* will not remain together in one's heart.

Vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam: *nāma-saṅkīrtana* is the very life of *vidyā-vadhū*. *Vidyā* is that by which we can know *jīva-tattva*, *māyā-tattva*, and ultimately Kṛṣṇa; it does not mean knowledge of mundane science or how to make money. Real *vidyā* is *bhakti* and ultimately assumes the form of the *vadhū*, or consort, of Kṛṣṇa. First there is *sādhana-bhakti*, then *bhāva-bhakti*, and finally *prema-bhakti*. After entering *prema-bhakti*, one's devotion develops through the stages of *sneha*, *māna*, *praṇaya*, *rāga*, *anurāga*, *bhāva* and finally *mahābhāva*. The

embodiment of *mahābhāva* is Śrīmatī Rādhikā, who is the *vadhū*, or consort, of Kṛṣṇa. Over and above the *sandhinī-śakti*, the *saṁvit*- and *hlādinī-śaktis* fully manifest as *rādhā-bhāva*. This is *vidyā-vadhū*, and if even one ray of this transcendental potency enters into our hearts, it is called *bhāva*.

Ānandāmbudhi-varḍhanam prati-padam: if we are chanting *harināma* with this *bhāva*, then with every step we will experience increasing *ānanda*, divine joy. In the *mahā-mantra*, there is *kṛṣṇa-nāma* and also Hare, which means She who attracts Kṛṣṇa away to the *kuñja*, Śrīmatī Rādhikā. This *bhāva* is so deep that it has no end, and this is the *nāma*, so saturated with *rasa*, that Caitanya Mahāprabhu brought to this world. When we chant the *mahā-mantra* with this *bhāva*, then every step will submerge us deeper into the ocean of divine bliss. *Pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanam* — what is *pūrṇāmṛta*, the complete nectar? *Prema*, and one will perpetually relish it. Absorbed in chanting the name in this way, our *ācāryas* such as Jayadeva Gosvāmī, Sanātana Gosvāmī and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura could envision divine pastimes and compose such nectarean literatures. And *sarvātma-snapanam* — one will never desire to resurface from that ocean of nectar where there is not even a trace of *māyā*, meaning that they have entered into *svarūpa-siddhi*. This is the explanation of the first verse of Mahāprabhu's *Śikṣāṣṭaka* given by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda, whose return to Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes we are commemorating on this day.

In his poem Vaiṣṇava ke?, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda states:

***kīrtana prabhāve smaraṇa haibe
sei kāle nirjana bhajana sambhava***

Smaraṇa, remembrance, will come as a result of performing *kīrtana*, and at that time *bhajana* in seclusion becomes possible.



*Nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om
viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata
Śrī Śrīmad
Bhakti-mayukha
Bhāgavata Gosvāmī
Mahārāja*



*Nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om
viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata
Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti-vijñāna
Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja*

Śrīla Bhakti-mayukha Bhāgavata Gosvāmī Mahārāja

[January 08, 2024 was the disappearance day of Śrīla Bhakti-mayukha Bhāgavata Gosvāmī Mahārāja in Vṛndāvana, India. The following is the *bhāva-anuvāda* of the *kathā* given by Śrīla Bhakti-vijñāna Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja for the same *tithi*, on December 19, 2014 and December 25, 2016. **Editors' input:** Additional text has been included in square brackets to facilitate the flow of content.]

Today is a special *tithī*. It is the disappearance day of Śrīla Bhakti-mayukha Bhāgavata Gosvāmī Mahārāja. His name was Rūpa-vilāsa dāsa prior to taking *sannyāsa* from Śrīla Bhakti-bhūdeva Śrautī Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

His Literary Contribution

After joining the *maṭha*, Śrī Rūpa-vilāsa dāsa served in the editorial department.

He edited and published Śrīla Prabhupāda's 'Upadeśāmṛta — Questions and Answers' in two volumes, after the disappearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda. One will get answers to all their [bhakti-related] questions if they read this book. He published Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's commentary on Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura's *Prārthanā* and Śrī *Prema-bhakti Candrikā*. He also published *Mantrārtha-dipikā*

(elucidation of the *mantras*), *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Vedānta-sūtra*, *Guru-sevā* and many other books. He also wrote many series of articles for our '*Caitanya-vāñī*.'

***Niṣṭhā* In Śrīla Prabhupāda**

During the manifest presence of Śrīla Prabhupāda, if any family members of the *brahmacārīs* would come to the *maṭha* to take them back home, they would be directed to Śrī Rūpa-vilāsa dāsa, who would convincingly make them understand [that it was beneficial for their sons to stay in the *maṭha*]. When his own family members came to take him, the others said, "If Prabhupāda says, then he can go back." At that time, he said, "I will accept Prabhupāda's decision, but I cannot accept any verdict that keeps me away from his service." This was his specialty. I found his stance extremely remarkable.

Later, [when he established his own *maṭha*] Śrīla Bhakti-mayukha Bhāgavata Gosvāmī Mahārāja, would also unfailingly send some donation for the service of Śrīla Prabhupāda at his birth place, Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Purī. Such was his *niṣṭhā* in Śrīla Prabhupāda's service.

Impeccable Ācāra Dissipates Misunderstanding In Ekacakrā

In Ekacakrā, the birthplace of Nityānanda Prabhu, there was a propaganda that the Gauḍīya Maṭha was averse to the worship of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu and hence acts against *siddhānta* (established scriptural tenets). But when Śrīla Bhāgavata Mahārāja, a brāhmaṇa by birth from Ekacakrā itself, visited the temple, he paid *śāṣṭāṅga-praṇāmas* (prostrated obeisances) to the Deity after removing his upper cloth and glorifying Nityānanda Prabhu by saying His *praṇāma-mantra*. The *pujārī* was baffled seeing this [affectionate and reverential mood]. He considered, "Even those who worship Śrī Nityānanda here, don't pay obeisances like this! How can it be said that the Gauḍīya Maṭha does not regard Nityānanda Prabhu?" Śrīla Bhāgavata Mahārāja also established a *maṭha* close

to Ekacakrā. Gradually, this misconception was dissipated by the impeccable precept (*ācāra*) of Śrīla Bhāgavata Mahārāja and other disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

A Service Opportunity

I got the opportunity to serve Śrīla Bhāgavata Mahārāja only on one occasion. He stayed at our *maṭha* on his visit to Māyāpura in his advanced age. He went to *Yoga-pīṭha*, Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, etc for *darśana*. Śrīla Bhakti-kusuma Śramaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja was working in the *patrikā* department in Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, so Śrīla Bhāgavata Mahārāja honoured *prasādam* with him. It was his *niyama* to taste everything that was offered. We had also prepared one variety of rice from Assam for him, which was very delectable and of excellent quality. He praised it very much and asked, “Where did you get this from? I have never tasted rice like this before!”

On his visit to Vṛndāvana, he had stayed in our maṭha, going for *darśanas* from there everyday.

The appearance and disappearance days of Vaiṣṇavas are both equally important.

Even simply remembering a Vaiṣṇava’s name constitutes serving him. And this becomes the cause of our auspiciousness. That is why it is an offense not to glorify them on their *tīthīs*. If you do not know anything about them, then even by taking their name, all auspiciousness is achieved.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had a transcendental rule that when anyone offered him *praṇāma*, he offered his greetings back by folding his hands and saying, *dāso ‘smi*: “I am your servant.” Seeing such humble behaviour on the part of his Gurudeva, Śrī Vinodabihārī Brahmācārī always hid while offering him his *praṇāma*. Śrīla Prabhupāda had another transcendental practice: he always addressed his disciples and others using the honorific ‘*āp*’ (you). But because he was so satisfied with Śrī Vinodabihārī’s intimate service he would use ‘*tū*’, ‘*tuī*’ (the most informal way of saying ‘you’) and other loving words to address him. Very few amongst Prabhupāda’s disciples received such good fortune.

The Nectarean Instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda

Question 1—Is *kīrtana* the best limb of devotional service?

Answer—Among all the limbs of devotional service (*bhakti*), *kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana* is the most prominent and essential limb. One receives the qualification to advance in the life of *paramārtha* (devotional service) through *śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana*. The holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāma*) is all-powerful. It has the ability to fulfill all desires and bestow the ultimate result of love for Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-prema*).

Through *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, we will develop detachment from all mundane activities, and all material thoughts and conceptions will go away. If *kṛṣṇa-nāma* arises on our tongue by good fortune, only then can we give up our duties in the material world including service to society (*samāja-sevā*), service to nation (*deśa-sevā*), and service to mother and father (*mātā-pitā-sevā*), and exclusively serve Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Only then will our desire to enjoy sense gratification go away. Only by *kṛṣṇa-nāma* are all obstacles and impediments on the path of devotional service easily removed. This *kṛṣṇa-nāma* is not only the *sādhana* (practice of devotional service), but also the *sādhya* (ultimate fruit of devotional service). One must utter *kṛṣṇa-nāma* repeatedly with faith (*śraddhā*) under the guidance of a spiritual master. All auspiciousness arises by *śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāma*. Therefore, the welfare of the living entities is attained by *śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāma*, which is endowed with extraordinary power. Only *kṛṣṇa-nāma* can drown us in the ocean of eternal bliss. This *nāma* is the shelter of all transcendental mellows (*rasas*).

Śrī Gaura-sundara is the most worshipable object. He is worshipable even for all the worshipable personalities in the world. While Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Kṛṣṇa Himself, by following *bhāgavata-dharma*

(behavior of a devotee) He showed the residents of the world that *śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana* is the epitome of *bhāgavata-dharma*. *Kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana*, the congregational chanting of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, is the *mahā-dhyāna* (best meditation), *mahā-yajña* (best sacrifice), and *mahā-arcana* (best Deity worship). Meditation on Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-dhyāna*), sacrifice for Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-yajña*), and worship of the Deity of Kṛṣṇa are incomplete without *kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana*; perfection in these activities and their ultimate result are achieved only when *kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana* is included.

Question 2—What is the duty of householders?

Answer: If we always keep endeavoring for bodily comforts, then we will certainly become *grha-vratī* (one who has taken a vow to execute family duties; one who has decided to live in a comfortable home although it is actually miserable). We will receive auspiciousness and welfare by always endeavoring for the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa alone. Householder devotees must always remain engaged in assisting and serving those who are completely and continually engaged in the devotional service of Lord Kṛṣṇa, having forsaken wife, sons, home, family, friends, and relatives.

Only then will householders achieve auspiciousness, and their attachment to *saṁsāra* (family life and the conditioned state of existence) can be somewhat reduced. Householders undertake unfathomable, hard efforts for their wife, sons, and daughters. Similarly, *pāramārthika-grhasthas* or *grhastha-vaiṣṇavas* (devotee householders who are endeavoring for the ultimate goal of life—*kṛṣṇa-prema*, love of Godhead) should also toil hard, but for the service of Bhagavān. If wife, sons, and other members of the family engage in devotional service (*bhajana*), then they should be maintained and nourished nicely. Otherwise, it is not correct to maintain a snake by feeding milk to it. Knowing their association to be adverse and obstructive to devotional service, one should separate from them.

As soon as we consider ourselves to be the Lord or an enjoyer and try to establish lordship over others, we become subjugated by *māyā* (the illusory potency) and *prakṛti* (material nature). In the present time, the only auspicious duty for all of us who are afflicted by distress is to give up attachment to worldly life and enter the world of Kṛṣṇa. We can be delivered from material existence only when we take shelter without duplicity at the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva; there is no other way. One is delivered from material existence by the mercy of Guru (spiritual master). Can Guru be a nondevotee (*abhakta*); have desires other than to render devotional service (*anya-abhilāṣī*); be a fruitive worker (*karmī*); be duplicitous; be an atheistic monist (*nāstika-māyāvādī*); or be a mystic (*yogī*)? If one does not have firm devotion for *Parama-puruṣa* Bhagavān, can one become a *sad-guru* (bona fide spiritual master)?

It is not true that only persons in the renounced order of life should render service to the spiritual master; both householders and persons in the renounced order should perform *guru-sevā* (service to the spiritual master.) The *hari-kathā* (narrations of the pastimes of Lord Hari) emanating from the lotus mouth of the spiritual master removes the darkness of ignorance upon reaching the ears of those who are inclined to render service. Then one's eyes become pure, and one can easily have *darśana* (vision) of Kṛṣṇa.

The only reason for our complete downfall is our desire to become the Lord or an enjoyer. If we choose the path of *preya-patha* (worldly desire), staying busy in worldly activities, then we will certainly burn in the fire of three kinds of afflictions: *ādhi-daivika*, *ādhi-bhautika*, and *ādhyātmika-kleśas*. One should not listen to the advice of one's uncontrolled mind or that of whimsical mental speculators (*mano-dharmī* people). Rather, one should diligently follow the advice of sincere persons who are always engaged in loving devotional service to Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Question 3—What is service?

Answer—Service is not a function or activity of the body or mind. Service is the function and activity of the soul. Service is not done with the profiteering mentality of a greedy merchant. Service rendered to Lord Kṛṣṇa with the desire to bestow happiness on Him is indeed *kṛṣṇa-sevā*. Such service does not have even a tinge of desire for one's personal happiness. Service is the continuous, causeless, unimpeded function of the soul. It is impossible to understand the Vedānta without rendering faithful service to Śrī Gurudeva. Only a devotee of Bhagavān can become a spiritual master; this is not a light or joking matter. In *Śrī Bhagavad-gītā*, Bhagavān Himself says, "I render service to a person as per the service he renders to Me." In *kāntā-rasa* or *madhura-rasa* (conjugal mellow), one renders service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa with all of one's limbs; thus, Śrī Kṛṣṇa considers Himself to be indebted. Therefore, only in *kāntā-rasa* or *madhura-rasa* is surrender (*śaraṇāgati*) complete and service (*sevā*) perfected.

Question 4—How can we increase our devotion?

Answer—As one renders service, the inclination to serve awakens more and more. If there is no desire to serve the spiritual master, there is no question of increase in service attitude. If our heart or mind (*citta-vṛtti*) is attached to the lotus feet of the spiritual master (*guru*), then wherever we may be, our desire to render service will increase. Otherwise, only the propensity to engage in worldly activities will increase. All kinds of inconveniences will be removed by always rendering service to Bhagavān. However, if we give up the service of Bhagavān and apply our service in material or worldly affairs (*saṁsāra*), in the illusory potency (*māyā*), and in collecting objects for our sense gratification, then certainly we will be restless and anxious. One's devotion (*bhakti*) cannot increase without associating with devotees and serving them.

We have taken shelter at the lotus feet of the

spiritual master (*guru*) and Śrī Kṛṣṇa; however, we do not have even a tinge of taste for rendering service. If we do not take shelter of the path of devotional service (*bhakti-mārga*); do not engage in devotional service; do not render service in various ways to the spiritual master and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, then how can we hope for our welfare or well-being?

First, we will have to take shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva. In other words, we will have to become 'smaller'—this is the meaning of the word 'shelter' (*āśraya*). It is the duty of a sheltered person (*āśrita*) to render service to his worshipable object. Are we doing this? We will have to offer all our possessions to the lotus feet of the spiritual master (*guru-pādma-padma*); then, we will obtain Bhagavān, who is absolute reality (*pūrṇa-vastu*). It is a great misfortune that we do not do so; we are unwilling to give up even a little bit, and yet we claim to need mercy and Bhagavān. Bhagavān is the indwelling Supersoul residing in everyone's heart; we cannot cheat or deceive Him. When the inclination for rendering service to the spiritual master (*guru-sevā*) does not awaken, how can the inclination to render service to Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*) increase? If, despite turning to the lotus feet of the spiritual master, our desire to associate with women (*strī-saṅga*) and attraction to worldly life are increasing, it means that we are not progressing; rather, we are falling down. If one sincerely takes shelter at the lotus feet of the spiritual master and renders service unto him, then he will certainly obtain the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa, obtain divine knowledge about Kṛṣṇa, and receive the bliss of rendering service (*sevānanda*) due to his service attitude (*sevā-vṛtti*).

We should do only those activities by which the inclination for sense gratification and worldly attachment is reduced. In this way, one's false ego of being the doer or enjoyer goes far away. In that situation, we can experience that the entire world is meant for the enjoyment of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The inclination to render service to Bhagavān increases only when the false ego of 'I am the doer' and 'I

am the enjoyer' has gone far away. As long as one's desire to enjoy worldly life is strong and one remains very busy in worldly life, the inclination to serve Bhagavān cannot awaken. When eagerness for serving Bhagavān awakens, one considers himself to be a son of the spiritual master. Consequently, one's relationship with worldly mother, father, friends, and relatives is ended. Only then does one attain auspiciousness; in other words, he can truly reside in a monastery (*maṭha*).

Question 5—Can one not render service to Bhagavān by one's own effort?

Answer—If Bhagavān shows mercy to anyone, then only can he render service to Bhagavān. Otherwise, no one has the power to render such service within this material world which is full of disturbance (*kolāhala*). *Hari-sevā* (service to Lord Hari) is not some sort of sport or spectacle.

One who is captivated by women, high status of birth, opulence, scholarship, and beauty can never render service to Lord Hari. Such service is possible only when we become free from desiring these things for ourself, and offer them in service to Gopī-jana-vallabha (Śrī Kṛṣṇa who is the beloved of the *gopīs*). The conclusion is that as long as one possesses the false ego of having taken birth in a prestigious family or aristocratic lineage, the false ego of mundane scholarship, the false ego of beauty, or the false ego of wealth, one is unfit to render service to Bhagavān.

Under the control of false pride (*mada*), the living entity considers himself to be the enjoyer of the material world. He wants to be the Lord Himself and not a servant (*dāsa*); this is the state of being a nondevotee of Kṛṣṇa (*avaiṣṇavatā*). The relationship between the worshipable Lord, the object of service (*sevyā*), and His servant (*sevaka*) is devotion (*bhakti*) or service (*sevā*). How is it possible for one to engage in loving service to the Lord or in devotional activities if one has the false ego of being the recipient of service? Service is rendered by a servant, not

by the worshipable Lord.

Fruitive workers (*karmīs*) or nondevotees (*abhaktas*) believe that they are the doer (*kartā*), and that they may engage in the spiritual practices of hearing (*śravaṇa*), chanting (*kīrtana*), seeing (*darśana*), and remembering (*smaraṇa*). Only when one gives up the false ego of being the doer and applies all of one's activities in the service of Bhagavān will all types of distress go away, and one can obtain the bliss of rendering service to Bhagavān.

If we consider ourselves to be a servant of Bhagavān, then we should engage in the service of Bhagavān for twenty-four hours a day. We should depend entirely upon Bhagavān. The only solution to all of our problems is to completely accept the arrangements (*vidhāna*) of Bhagavān, and to interpret and tolerate all adversities as His mercy.

In material existence, we render service in four types of relationships: husband—wife, parent—child, friend—friend, and master—servant. We have forgotten our eternal nature (*svarūpa*); forgotten that the living entity is by nature a servant of Kṛṣṇa. As a result of this forgetfulness, we have been bound in this material world by these four types of impermanent relationships. In this material world, we like everything in the beginning, but in the end everything becomes frustrating or distressful. *Mādhava hāya pariṇāma nirāśā*—"O Mādhava, in the end I only got disappointment." However, when we establish one of these relationships with Bhagavān, we definitely achieve auspiciousness, and only then can we render true service to Him. Persons in this material world can reach Vaikuṇṭha if they practice to serve Bhagavān in any one of these four relationships. However, if one in the material world desires to receive service from others, one remains bound in that world of transmigration, or repeated birth and death (*saṁsāra*). Thus, one must burn in the fire of the threefold miseries: *ādhyātmika* (miseries arising from the body and mind), *ādhidaivika* (miseries arising from other

living beings), and *ādhībhautika* (miseries arising from Nature).

We should always remember that we are not Kṛṣṇa; we are not the Lord. Rather, we are servants of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa alone is our eternal sevya (worshipable Lord and object of service). We are eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa; forgetting this and acting against His service, we were put in *saṁsāra-daśā* (the state of material bondage). In this way, our suffering knows no bounds. Material existence is the gateway to hell (*naraka*); there is only sense objects (*bhoga*) and sense gratification (*indriya-tarpaṇa*). One falls into this *saṁsāra-daśā* only due to forgetfulness of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, the scriptures say:

***cāri varṇāśramī yadi kṛṣṇa nāhi bhaje
svadharma karileo se raurave paḍi maje***

Meaning: *Brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, and *śūdra* are the four varṇas (divisions of society according to social orders), and *brahmacārī*, *grhastha*, *vānaprastha*, and *sannyāsa* are the four *āśramas* (divisions of society according to spiritual orders). This system is known as *varṇāśrama-dharma*, the divine arrangement for gradually increasing human spiritual understanding. However, if one properly follows *varṇāśrama-dharma* but does not worship Kṛṣṇa, despite following *sva-dharma* (duties enjoined in the scriptures) one will eventually fall to the hell named Raurava.

Question 6—How should we view material existence (*saṁsāra*)?

Answer—We should see this material existence and all its objects to be instruments meant for the service of Kṛṣṇa. All objects in this world are ingredients for *kṛṣṇa-sevā* (service of Lord Kṛṣṇa). By the mercy of the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa, we can be saved from *dvitīya-abhiniveśa* (attachment to objects other than those needed for the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa), and we will see that the whole world consists of Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-maya*)—it is His opulence and the object of His service. The same day we

have this realization, we will have *darśana* of Goloka in this material world. We should see all females as living entities meant for the enjoyment (*bhogyā*) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and as His beloved consorts (*kāntā* or *preyasī*). We should not cultivate any attitude of sense gratification towards them. They are meant to be enjoyed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, not the living entity (*jīva*). We should not see our mother and father in any way other than as the mother and father of Kṛṣṇa. We should not regard our son as our own servant, but as a servant of Bāla-gopāla (little cowherd boy Kṛṣṇa). Only then will we stop seeing the material world, and we will receive the *darśana* (vision) of Goloka within the *svarūpa* (form) of this material world.

Question 7—Is there necessity of direct association with, and service to, Śrī Gurudeva?

Answer—Certainly. One should have a direct relationship with Śrī Gurudeva. Those who do not want to render service to the spiritual master become cheated. Direct communication with *guru* is the first step on the path of divine service. *Guru* is to be served by every entity. If *guru* is not served, no one can really be served. I must not hear anything until I am authorized to hear by my divine master, Sri Gurudeva.

Question 8—Are we servants of the lotus feet of the spiritual master, who is foremost among the followers of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī?

Answer—Yes. The devotees who have taken shelter of the conjugal mellow (*madhura-rasa*) of Śrī Caitanyadeva take pride in regarding themselves as servants of the follower of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī (*śrī-rūpānuga-dāsa*), or as servants of the lotus feet of the spiritual master, who is foremost among the followers of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī.

Question 9—What is the highest and most auspicious form of benevolence?

Answer—“May your mind and intelligence be fixed at the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa”—only such a blessing or good wish is auspicious for the world. To engage the intelligence of living entities who are averse to Lord Kṛṣṇa in His service is the greatest benediction. To bestow devotion to Kṛṣṇa to everyone is the best charity. The heart of devotees always remains eager to benefit others in this way. The best knowledge is to know Bhagavān. Mahāprabhu Himself inquired from Rāmānandajī during their conversation.

***kauna vidyā vidyā-madhye sāra
rāya kahe—kṛṣṇa-bhakti binā vidyā nāhi āra***

Meaning: Prabhu inquired, “Among all the branches of knowledge, which branch is best?”

Rāya Rāmānanda replied, “*Kṛṣṇa-bhakti* (transcendental devotional service to Kṛṣṇa) is the most important.”

These days, Godless education (*nirīśvara-śikṣa*) is being propagated everywhere, and the result is that the residents of the world fail to attain their welfare now and in the future. One can best benefit mankind by distributing the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Question 10—Who has good fortune?

Answer—Destiny is of two types: good and bad. Good fortune is when one endeavors only to perform *hari-bhajana* and obtain *hari-bhakti* (devotion to Lord Hari) in this lifetime. Such a person does not have to take another material birth. If we take complete shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, then we will certainly be delivered and attain auspiciousness in this very birth. If despite taking this path of well-being we take bad association (*asat-saṅga*), then we can fall down. Therefore, we should always avoid hankering for *kanaka* (gold), *kāminī* (women), and *pratiṣṭhā* (name, fame, adoration, and prestige). All kinds of materialistic anxieties vanish when we repeatedly listen to topics about devotional service (*bhakti*). The words of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

are so true and beautiful that no other teachings can compare. Those who narrate the pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu that denounce the pursuit of mundane religiosity (*dharma*), economic development (*artha*), sense gratification (*bhoga*), and liberation (*mokṣa*) are indeed munificent. We should carefully consider how intelligent, thoughtful, and merciful the devotees of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu are. “I will control everyone; they must accept my rule”—only the grace of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu can save us from such foolish thinking (*dur-buddhi*).

Question 11—Who should we give charity to?

Answer—If one desires to give charity or help others, then that charity or help should be given only to the spiritual master (*guru*) and the devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇavas). We should trust and serve only those who render service to Bhagavān twenty-four hours a day. One should never trust or give charity to a person who does not serve Bhagavān, but rather accepts service from others.

Question 12—What is the conception of pure devotees?

Answer—The conception of pure devotees is that all the objects in the world are not for their sense enjoyment, but for the service of Bhagavān. All sentient and insentient things are for the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa only. All our activities should tend to His unalloyed service. ***Hṛṣīkeṇa hṛṣīkeśa sevanaṁ bhaktirucyate***—serving Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of all the senses, by one’s senses is known as devotional service (*bhakti*). Our prayer should be that He accept our worship. If we use bricks to construct our own house, calamity will follow, but if we use the bricks to construct a temple for Bhagavān, no calamity can befall us. If a material object is used for the service of Bhagavān, that is proper and beneficial; however, if it is used for satisfying one’s own senses, that is degrading. All of the material objects in the world have meaning only when they are used in the service of Bhagavān. Every action of the

devotees is done to provide happiness to Hari, Guru (spiritual master), and Vaiṣṇavas (devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa). Pure devotees do not do anything for themselves or for their friends and relatives, but only for Bhagavān.

Question 13—Whom should we serve?

Answer—The spiritual master and Bhagavān are both *adhokṣaja-vastu* (transcendental personalities who are beyond material sense perception). Those who have a relationship with the Absolute Person see the spiritual master as a form of Īśvara (the Supreme Lord). The spiritual master (*guru*) is servitor-Bhagavān or Āśraya-Bhagavān (the Supreme Personality of Servitorship). Therefore, the spiritual master is both a devotee and Bhagavān. Guru is the complete potency (*pūrṇa-śakti*) and Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the complete possessor of the potency (*pūrṇa-śaktimān*). According to the scriptures, there is no difference between the two. Guru always renders service to Bhagavān. We should serve Śrī Gurudeva, who is a devotee of Bhagavān and who serves Him all the time. Along with serving the spiritual master, we should serve Vaiṣṇavas who are dedicated to the spiritual master (*guru-niṣṭha* Vaiṣṇavas). There is no benefit in serving an ordinary living entity who is bound by the shackles of the illusory potency of the Lord, and who may be imitating a devotee. These days many hypocritical activities are going on in the name of Vaiṣṇavism. Therefore, we should serve only a bona fide spiritual master and genuine devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇavas). If a devotee falls down and becomes a non-devotee, we should not waste our time in serving him. One should render service to the spiritual master with firm faith and take shelter of his lotus feet. The scriptures describe ***viśrambheṇa guroḥ sevā***, which means that we should serve the spiritual master with intimacy, firm faith, and love. When one serves the spiritual master and Vaiṣṇavas with affection, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will certainly be pleased. One should not regard the spiritual master as an ordinary human being. *Sad-guru* (bona fide

spiritual master) is free from defects; therefore, one should not see defects in him.

Our time and facilities may be limited, so we should engage in *hari-bhajana* (devotional service to Lord Hari) as much as possible to attain our well-being.

Question 14—Does the pure saintly person receive respect in this world?

Answer—In this world which is full of duplicity, only duplicity receives respect. The pure saintly persons, who do not delude the living entities or put them on the wrong path, do not receive respect in this world. Serving imitation saints, who delude people in the name of *hari-kathā* (narrations of the pastimes of Lord Hari) and guide them to the wrong path, has become the religion of modern hypocritical society. That is, imitation saintly persons, who are themselves indulging in sense objects and who are teaching others about sense gratification, are greatly respected. Unfortunate people do not offer respect to genuine saintly persons who are detached from the sense objects and who instruct people to serve Bhagavān by giving up sense gratification. When pure saintly persons attempt to warn people about imitation or pretend *sādhus*, those deceitful imitators or pretenders accuse the real saintly persons of hypocrisy and deception. Unfortunate people believe the imitators and chastise the pure *sādhus*. *Māyā*, the illusory potency, will not free the living entities who are averse to God from their duplicity—she keeps them away from pure saintly persons (*śuddha-sādhus*).

Question 15—If one does not receive *guru-darśana* (vision of the spiritual master), will one also not receive Bhagavān's *darśana*?

Answer—No. Śrī Gurudeva is the *cinmaya* (conscious or spiritual) temple. Bhagavān is present in that temple. Bhagavān is actually subjugated by love. Therefore, He resides in the hearts of the spiritual master and the devotees who love Him. The scriptures say:

***śrutim apare smṛtim itare
bhāratam anye bhajantu bhava-bhītāḥ
aham iha nandaṁ vande
yasyālinde param brahma***

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya 19-96)

Meaning: “In a world frightened by birth and death, some people take shelter of the *śrutis*, some of the *smṛtis*, and some of the *Mahābhārata*. But I pay my homage to Śrī Nanda Mahārāja, in whose courtyard Parabrahma Śrī Kṛṣṇa is playing as a child.”

Many people pretend to be very eager for the vision of Bhagavān. However, they do not know that one meets with Bhagavān through meeting with the spiritual master. Devotional service (*bhakti*) does not even begin unless one takes shelter at the lotus feet of the spiritual master.

Only the spiritual master can establish our relationship with the lotus feet of Bhagavān. Śrī Kṛṣṇa sends to this world His topmost servant or devotee (*Vaiṣṇava*). In this way, one is introduced to the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Bhagavān has innumerable potencies. Among them is *karuṇā-śakti*, by which He bestows mercy on the living entities. Śrī Gurudeva is the incarnation of this mercy potency. The spiritual master gives instructions about serving the Deity (*śrī vigraha*) and the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*śrī nāma*). If we render service to the spiritual master while remaining aloof and distant due to a sense of awe and reverence, such service will not be effective. We have to serve the spiritual master with firm faith and love, just as Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī served Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara.

Question 16—Is it a calamity if one forgets the spiritual master?

Answer—Certainly. We shall certainly fall down from the path of devotional service the very moment we forget or become separated from the lotus feet of the spiritual master, who constantly attracts us to his beautiful feet. As soon as we become separated from the spiritual

master, many types of material desires shall devour us. It is our misfortune that we avoid service to the spiritual master for the sake of bodily comfort. If we do not always remember the spiritual master, who protects us from worldly matters and entanglements, we will certainly suffer a calamity. We will think of ourselves as the spiritual master, and have the misconception (*dur-buddhi*) that others should worship us.

Question 17—Who sees faults in the Vaiṣṇavas?

Answer—One who is averse to Bhagavān and whose senses are engaged in worldly topics sees defects in Vaiṣṇavas. In *Bhagavad-gītā*, Bhagavān says that His devotee never perishes or encounters inauspiciousness —‘*na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati*’. Can anyone engaged single-mindedly in the unalloyed devotional service of Bhagavān encounter inauspiciousness? Our vision is defective; therefore, we also see defects in Vaiṣṇavas. This is why we do not obtain auspiciousness despite great effort.

Question 18—Is Śrī Gurudeva present in all objects?

Answer—Yes. *Aśraya-jātīya guru-varga* (the spiritual masters who are the receptacle of love of Godhead) is present in various forms to show mercy to us. They are all manifestations of the initiating spiritual master (*dīkṣā-guru*), who is the bestower of transcendental knowledge (*divya-jñāna*). The *bimba* (form) of the *jagad-guru* (spiritual master of the whole world) is being reflected in various mirrors. In every object, my Śrī Gurudeva alone is being reflected. Kṛṣṇa, the object of the devotee’s love and affection (*viṣaya-jātīya-vastu*), is one half, and Śrī Gurudeva, the abode of love (*āśraya-jātīya-vastu*), is the other half. Complete, astonishing variety manifests only when these two meet. Kṛṣṇa is the full embodiment of *viṣaya-jātīya pratīti*, and Śrī Gurudeva is the full embodiment of *āśraya-jātīyapratīti*. Śrī Gurudeva

constantly instructs about serving Bhagavān; he is reflected in the hearts of all living entities, and he is present in every object as the shelter of love.

Question 19—Who will protect us from attachment to the material world?

Answer—Śrī Gurudeva, the beloved associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, can save us from death in the form of the material world. Who is the spiritual master? We should consider this subject. Only the spiritual master is engaged in the service of Bhagavān, who is complete and is the object of worship of all spiritual masters. There are many kinds of teachers; for example, those who teach wrestling, swimming, other sports, or worldly education in schools and colleges. However, no teacher among them can save us from death; in other words, stop our transmigration within this miserable world. They are unable to save themselves, so how can they save anyone else? Thus, the topic of such worldly teachers is not discussed here. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states that a spiritual master is not a true spiritual master; a parent is not a true parent; a demigod is not a true demigod; and friends and relatives are not true friends and relatives unless they can save us from death—coming and going in the material world—by instructing us about devotional service and protecting us from absorption in the material world. Due to ignorance—in other words, forgetting Bhagavān—we have to enter the mouth of death. That is, we have to fall into the endless cycle of birth and death. When we receive transcendental knowledge, we are easily saved from death. Whatever ordinary knowledge that we have acquired in this world will be of no value if for some reason we become insane, if we are paralyzed by a stroke, or if we die. Imitation spiritual masters cannot save us from death, but can only facilitate our sense gratification for some time. In other words, they can only give us instructions by which we can obtain temporary bodily happiness; they cannot save us from death in the form of worldly attachment. Thus, they are all

cheaters.

Question 20—How should we attract Bhagavān?

Answer—Bhagavān Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu says that in order to attract Bhagavān, we have to become even more humble and tolerant (*sunīca* and *dīna-hīna*) than a blade of grass. We will have to completely give up the false ego of having mundane scholarship (*vidyā*), beauty (*rūpa*), wealth, or power. Unless a person feels small and insignificant, how can he bow down to someone else and pray for help? In this world, we see that when a person is unable to accomplish a task even after much effort, he feels helpless and seeks help. When one offers prayers, it means that his pride and false egoism has subsided. Similarly, when Śrī Gaurasundara tells us to call out to Bhagavān, the purport is that first we have to realize that we are helpless and we cannot overcome the cycle of birth and death by our own endeavors. Then, we can petition Bhagavān for help. However, if someone calls out to Bhagavān only for assistance in worldly matters, it means that he has no love for Him; this is not humility, but duplicity or selfishness. Such cries for help do not reach Bhagavān. Bhagavān is supremely independent. He is completely conscious and is the indwelling Supersoul of all living entities. He is not dependent on anyone. Our cries will not reach the supremely independent Bhagavān as long as we are not truly non-duplicitous and humble.

One more thing is that even if we call out to Bhagavān and become more meek and humble than a blade of grass, if we do not have tolerance, then our call will go in vain. If we show intolerance by falling victim to greed for some object, this is against *trṇādapi sunīca* (spiritual humility). If we have full faith that if Bhagavān is pleased there can be no lack of anything, when we are tempted by greed we will not exhibit intolerance by falling in love with trivial things, and even if someone destroys our earthly possessions, we will not be angry.

Many times we doubt the efficacy of calling out to

Bhagavān. The scriptures describe many other alternatives, such as *karma* (fruitive action), *jñāna* (speculative knowledge), and *tapa* (austerity). Therefore, we have other choices. Such thinking arises only in the absence of *sahana-śīlatā* (forbearance, tolerance, patience). We need a guardian to protect us from such wrong ideas. The spiritual master alone is such a capable guardian. Śrī Narottama Ṭhākura says, *āśraya laiyā bhaje, tāre kṛṣṇa nāhi tyaje, āra saba mare akāraṇa*—“Kṛṣṇa never abandons those who engage in devotional service and take shelter at the lotus feet of a spiritual master and Vaiṣṇavas (devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa).” Apart from such fortunate persons, everyone else dies in vain; Kṛṣṇa does not even look at them.

Question 21—Is there a special need for service to a spiritual master (*guru-sevā*)?

Answer—One should first render service to a spiritual master (Śrī Gurudeva). In this material world, one requires a teacher to be successful in *karma* (fruitive activities) and *jñāna* (speculative knowledge), and to fulfill worldly aspirations. However, only insignificant results are obtained through such worldly teachers. The bona fide spiritual master (*pāramārthika* Śrī Gurudeva) does not give such insignificant results; he bestows true welfare. The moment we become disconnected from the mercy of a *āśraya-jātīya-bhagavān* spiritual master (Śrī Gurudeva, the Supreme Personality of Servitorship, who is the receptacle of love for Lord Kṛṣṇa), many types of desires other than for service to Bhagavān arise in our heart. If Vaiṣṇavas who have deep faith in *guru* do not instruct us as to how to take shelter of the lotus feet of a *guru*, and how to behave with Śrī Gurudeva, then we will lose the jewel that has come in our hands. Scholarship is considered glorious as long as there are foolish persons in this world; similarly, piety (*pūṇya*) is considered glorious as long as there are sinful (*pāpī*) persons in this world.

Question 22—Should our life be ideal?

Answer—Our life should be ideal. We should remain careful that no one thinks badly of our character. For those with weak faith, disaster is looming at every step because they are not *antar-darśī* (deeply intuitive), and they lack insight about the nature of true Vaiṣṇavas.. They are only capable of considering the external or outward behavior of others. They cannot determine if one really has devotion in the heart. They try to distinguish devotees from non-devotees only by their external practices. Therefore, we must be careful that our behavior does not cause others to lose the faith that they have developed from associating with devotees.

Question 23—What disease do we have?

Answer—Our basic disease is abandoning endeavors for Kṛṣṇa's service in order to collect things that bring us temporary happiness or comfort. We like *viṣaya-rasa* (mellow of sense enjoyment), but we do not like serving Kṛṣṇa, who is the best of all *viṣayas* (objects for sense enjoyment); this is our misfortune. A patient suffering from the liver disease jaundice finds the taste of sweet sugar-candy to be bitter. Similarly, being absorbed in sense objects, we have no taste for *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, the chanting of the holy names of Lord Kṛṣṇa, that are sweeter than anything in this world, and no taste for *kṛṣṇa-sevā*, serving Lord Kṛṣṇa. If poison gets into the body, even honey may taste bitter.

Sugar-candy is the only medicine for jaundice. As one eats sugar-candy, the disease slowly goes away and one gradually starts to taste its sweetness. Similarly, if due to *anarthas* (unwanted habits and thoughts) one has no desire to chant the names of Lord Kṛṣṇa or serve Him, if one nevertheless does so, then his indifference (*bahirmukhatā*) will gradually go away and his attachment to material existence will begin to diminish. As a result, he begins to develop a taste for chanting the holy name of Bhagavān and serving Him. At that time, the sweetness of

the holy name automatically reveals itself and engages him in serving Bhagavān through the spiritual senses.

Question 24—What should a devotee do when experiencing worldly discomfort or inconvenience?

Answer—All is Bhagavān's will. Therefore, in the event of inconvenience, one should tolerate it and wait for the mercy of Bhagavān to manifest. Nṛsimha-deva always helps His devotees in all kinds of sufferings. Therefore, while rendering devotional service, we should not worry about our maintenance (*pālana*) and protection (*rakṣā*). All kinds of sufferings of the devotees are removed by surrendering unto Bhagavān.

Question 25—Is Śrī Gurudeva completely free from attachment?

Answer—Of course. My Gurudeva is completely without attachment (*nirapekṣa*). He does not depend or rely on anyone in this world; in other words, he does not want anything from anyone. His only wish is that all people worship Bhagavān without duplicity. He considers it the highest compassion to engage someone in the service of Kṛṣṇa, and he considers it the greatest violence to engage someone in worldly activities or encourage someone towards the path of sense gratification.

Question 26—Does one get a bona fide spiritual master (*sad-guru*) by the mercy of Bhagavān?

Answer—Yes. If we have such good fortune that we get the association of devotees of Bhagavān, then the arrangement for *sad-guru* is made by Bhagavān Himself. He makes us fearless through the spiritual master; He eliminates all of our fear through the agency of *guru*. Those devoid of such good fortune (*bhāgya*) have to face many kinds of inconveniences. One gets a spiritual master befitting one's qualification (*adhikāra*) and good fortune.

Question 27—Does one attain auspiciousness

only after completely surrendering oneself (*ātma-samarpaṇa*)?

Answer—Certainly. Śrī Gurudeva is fully aware of my stupidity, incompleteness, materialistic thinking (*asat-vicāra-praṇālī*), unsteady principles (*asthira-siddhānta*), etc. That is why he makes appropriate arrangements according to my disease. If one approaches him, there is no need to approach or hear from anyone else; such is the nature of a bona fide spiritual master. Bhagavān is the embodiment of the topmost auspiciousness. He has entrusted my welfare in the hands of *sad-guru*. If I completely surrender to the lotus feet of such a spiritual master, then he will bring complete auspiciousness to me. However, if I show duplicity, then he will cheat me. He says, “You have neither become my disciple nor accepted my instruction (*śāśana*). Moreover, due to listening to hypocrites, your ears are not fit to hear my words. Therefore, you are cheated.” So, I must bow down and respectfully accept the sincere arrangements he makes for my well-being; this is the characteristic of surrender.

Question 28—Where are we experiencing inconvenience (*asuvidhā*)?

Answer—I desire auspiciousness, but I mistake inauspiciousness for auspiciousness. I call a doctor to get rid of my disease, but when the doctor comes and tells me to take this medicine and avoid certain foodstuffs, I tell him that he should cater to my wishes. Is this taking proper treatment from the doctor? Can my disease be overcome with this type of attitude and behavior? Similarly, if I approach *guru*, but do not listen to his words and act according to my whims, then how can I achieve auspiciousness? Thus, one who treats a patient according to the patient’s wishes cannot be called a real physician. If a doctor gives me medicine as I like, just to give satisfaction to my mind, and then leaves after taking his fee, instead of giving me the medicine that will actually cure my ailment, I will only get momentary happiness and

my disease will not be eliminated.

Question 29—How can one attain devotion?

Answer—One can obtain devotion only with the association of devotees and not by any other means. The attainment of Lord Kṛṣṇa is the topmost auspiciousness for the living entities. One can obtain that only with the greatest fortune. When the desire to travel within the universe (*brahmāṇḍa*) ends, the living entity becomes fortunate. When *ātma-dharma*, the constitutional function of the soul, is revealed by the mercy of the spiritual master, the living entity obtains the seed of the creeper of devotion (*bhakti-latā-bīja*). The *guru's* grace and Kṛṣṇa's grace are not different; they bestow their prasāda on one after being fully pleased. Mahāprabhu has said:

***brahmāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva
guru-kṛṣṇa prasāde pāya bhakti-latā bīja***

Bhakti (devotion) means to render service to the Lord by becoming His servant. The purport of *bhakti* is to bestow happiness on the Lord. Service rendered to the Lord for one's personal happiness cannot be regarded as devotion.

One receives the seed of devotion from the spiritual master. We will have to become a gardener and plant this seed in the field of our heart, and then sprinkle it with the water of hearing (*śravaṇa*) and chanting (*kīrtana*). To become a gardener means to be situated in the following thoughts: "I am a servant; service alone is my occupation." The seed of the creeper of devotion that is obtained from the spiritual master is actually bestowed personally by Kṛṣṇa, Who out of causeless mercy assumes the form of the spiritual master. After receiving that seed, we should engage only in service to Kṛṣṇa. If we fail to do so and remain indifferent to His service, then many types of obstacles will surround us. On the strength of Gurudeva's mercy, all obstacles in devotional service or *bhajana* will certainly go away. We will feel peaceful only when obstacles to devotional service are removed. One can

engage in aural reception or hearing from the mouth of the spiritual master and *sādhus* (saintly persons). Performing *kīrtana* as per the instructions of the *guru* and devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇavas) also falls under the category of *śravaṇa*. If we separate ourselves from the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva for even a moment, then a mountain of calamities will fall on our head. Hearing and chanting is the water. A devotee under the shelter of a *guru* is receiving that water. Our only duty is to always serve our *guru* with *viśrambha* (intimacy); that is, with intense dedication and affection. We must associate with our spiritual master and Vaiṣṇavas. We must carefully nourish and protect our creeper of devotion. We should render service to Bhagavān nicely. If we follow these instructions, then we will never face a calamity. Otherwise, difficulties will definitely come our way.

Question 30—Are we alive or dead?

Answer—The living entity (*jīva*) is a servant of Bhagavān, and serving Him is his religion. Devotional service (*sevā*) alone is the natural function of the sentient being. [Devotional service (*sevā*) alone keeps us in the living state.] Therefore, we are truly alive only if we are serving Bhagavān. A person who is devoid of such service is actually dead. One has no duty other than serving Kṛṣṇa and devotees. The *jīva* is a servant of the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa. It is not good conduct if one acts freely without following the prescribed rules and regulations; in this case one is alive in a material sense, but is spiritually dead (*jīvanmṛta*). In other words, those who do not serve Bhagavān appear to be alive, but they are actually dead. A person who is on the path of sense enjoyment (*pravṛtti-mārga*) and performing fruitive activities (*karma-kāṇḍa*) is indeed dead. One who is averse to serving Bhagavān has the propensity to engage in temporary activities, not eternal activities. Without the service of Bhagavān, who is the eternal, real Entity (*vāstava-vastu*), one is dead (*mṛta-avasthā*). Those who remain subordinate to the illusory

potency of the Lord (*māyā*), instead of being subordinate and obedient to Kṛṣṇa, are actually dead, although they seem to be living. The constitutional function (*dharma*) of the soul is not to be engrossed in the material body and mind; this is the state of one who is dead or ignorant. Devotional service is the only source of happiness; everything else is a source of misery. Thus, both sense gratifiers (*bhogī*) and dry renunciators (*tyāgī*) are spiritually dead, unhappy and disturbed (*aśānta*). Only the materially-desireless devotees are spiritually alive, happy, and peaceful.

Question 31—Is it appropriate to see others as equal to guru?

Answer—No. One should not disobey the spiritual master or criticize the timeless, divine words of the *ācāryas* (*śrauta-vāṇī*). Considering others to be as worshipable as the *guru* leads to disrespecting him. The living entity cannot attain auspiciousness without taking shelter of Vrajendra-nandana, Who is *advaya-jñāna* (nondual reality). My revered spiritual master, Śrī Gurudeva, is an ocean of mercy. Only one drop of his mercy can drown me in an ocean of joy.

What mercy does Gurudeva not bestow? Gurudeva used to graciously say, “Come to me after renouncing everything—scholarship (*pāṇḍitya*), purity (*pavitratā*), and knowledge (*abhijñatā*). You do not need to go anywhere else. I will bestow upon you all that you need, including shelter, wisdom, talent, adequate sense restraint, and the renounced order of life (*sannyāsa*). Just come to me. Don’t pursue home, family, and scholarship, which ordinary people regard as their goal of life (*prayojana*). You should not consider these to be your goal of life (*prayojana*).”

Question 32—What do saintly persons do?

Answer—It is the topmost duty of a saintly person (*sādhū*) to destroy the wicked intelligence of wicked people. A *sādhū* is like one who stands near a pillar (*yūpa*-

kāṣṭha) where an animal sacrifice is being performed—with sword in hand (the weapon of his wise words), he cuts people's material desires, which are compared to a she-goat which is never satisfied. *Sādhus* never flatter anyone; one who flatters others cannot be a saintly person. *Sādhus* only bestow auspiciousness on others, and one who flatters cannot bring auspiciousness to anyone; he is really our enemy. Devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa do not have the tendency to accept bad association (*asat-saṅga*). In order to bring auspiciousness to those who engage in harmful materialistic association (*asat-saṅgi-jana*), Vaiṣṇavas cut their materialistic inclination (*pravṛtti*) with the weapon of their wise words, bringing them to *sat-saṅga*, association of saintly persons. If we take shelter without duplicity of Śrī Gurudeva's lotus feet, then in this very birth we will definitely have an audience with Bhagavān.

Question 33—What object is *śrī-vigraha*, the Deity?

Answer—*Śrī-vigraha* is the *arcāvatāra*, the Deity form of Bhagavān.

pratimā naha tumi sākṣāt vrajendra-nandana

Having *darśana* (audience) of Lord Jagannātha, Śrī Sacī-nandana Gaura-hari Himself said, “You are not a Deity; You are Vrajendra-nandana Śyāma-sundara Himself.” Thus, we should not consider the Deity to be like an idol or statue of an ordinary person. For a conditioned living entity (*baddha-jīva*) there is a difference between the body (*deha*) and soul (*dehī*), but for the Deity of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, there is no such distinction. *Śrī Vigraha*, the transcendental Deity, is *sat-cit-ānanda-svarūpa*, the embodiment of knowledge, bliss, and eternity. He is a supremely merciful incarnation of Bhagavān (*bhagavad-avatāra*).

Question 34—What is the best worship?

Answer—The service of Nandanandana in *madhura-rasa* (conjugal-mellow) is the best among all

devotional practices (*sādhana*s) and also the best among all goals of human life (*sādhya*s). Indeed, the worship of Nandanandana is the acme of worship. The *Vraja-devīs* (damsels of Vraja) did not accept Nanda-nandana, the son of Nanda Mahārāja, as their beloved due to His opulence (*aiśvarya*); no amount of opulence could attract them. Their love for Kṛṣṇa is natural and spontaneous. They always endeavor only for His happiness. Because of this great causeless desire, they see Kṛṣṇa as their beloved (*kānta*).

Question 35—What is a natural way to control the mind?

Answer—One can steady the mind only by the loud singing of *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, the holy names of Lord Kṛṣṇa. By engaging in *karma* (fruitive action), *jñāna* (speculative knowledge), and *yoga* (mysticism), the mind may become only momentarily steady, and afterwards it may be even more restless.

Question 36—Is it appropriate for us to make disciples?

Answer—We should not make disciples; we have to become disciples. In other words, we have to continuously remain engaged in the service of our spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa, without interruption. The Vaiṣṇavas have *darśana* of *guru* in all objects; that is, they regard all objects as meant for the service of Bhagavān. When we develop the pride or false ego that ‘we are Vaiṣṇavas,’ we cannot render service to Viṣṇu and Vaiṣṇavas. Only one who thinks, “I do not do anything and cannot do anything; whatever Bhagavān makes me do, I do” can bring auspiciousness to the living entities. Such a person is always engaged in the service of Bhagavān and is devoid of the false ego of being the doer, and he can turn a living entity towards Kṛṣṇa. Such a person has the realization (*anubhūti*), “I personally do not do anything; Bhagavān is making everything happen. In reality, I am an instrument conducted by Bhagavān.” Merely saying or thinking such words, while

keeping duplicity in the heart, will not do.

Question 37—If this is so, why did you make many disciples?

Answer—Actually, up to now I have not made anyone a disciple. Although some call them my disciples, I consider them to be my *guru-varga* (spiritual masters).

To associate with others means to receive something from them. Apart from what I have received from my spiritual master, I do not accept anything from anyone. Apart from the instructions of my Gurudeva, I do not follow anyone else's instructions.

I do not accept anything from anyone for myself. Auspiciousness is possible only when someone faithfully or lovingly gives something for the service of Guru and Kṛṣṇa, and then it is reverently used in such service. One can enter the kingdom of devotional service (*bhajana-rāja*) when one knows the secret of engaging every object in the service of Bhagavān, instead of viewing it as an object of one's sense gratification.

Question 38—What is our greatest duty?

Answer—This human birth is fleeting and extremely rare. Therefore, we should not waste time in atheism (*pāṣaṇḍatā*), offenses (*aparādha*), or futile activities. Leaving everything else aside, we should engage in *hari-bhajana* (devotional service to Lord Hari). We received this human birth after many lifetimes; it is the rarest type of birth and the most difficult to attain. Although human birth is temporary, it can bestow *paramārtha*, *kṛṣṇa-prema*, the love of Lord Kṛṣṇa which is the ultimate goal of life. Before the demise of their body, those who are intelligent and clever give up other activities and use it for *sādhana* (spiritual practice), and thus they attain the well-being of their soul (*ātma-kalyāṇa*).

While answering questions from the 88,000 sages headed by Śauaka Ṛṣi, Śrīla Sūta Gosvāmī explained that it is impossible to engage in devotional service to

Bhagavān without accepting a spiritual master, and that Bhagavān cannot be obtained by any means other than devotional service.

***anyābhlāṣitā-śūnyaṁ jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam
ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlanam bhaktir uttamā***

During that conversation, there was a detailed discussion on the following topics: (1) the necessity of accepting a spiritual master; (2) the hierarchy of manifestation of Bhagavān based on *bhagavattā*; (3) Śrī Kṛṣṇa's killing of Kāṁsa; and (4) Śrī Kṛṣṇa's not returning to Vraja.

If we want our personal welfare, we have to take shelter at the lotus feet of *sad-guru*, a bona fide spiritual master. *Sad-guru* does not speak words that stimulate nondevotional taste. Our greatest, eternal duty is to perform *kṛṣṇa-bhajana*, devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa. *Sad-guru* only teaches this ultimate duty. Worldly people say things that encourage our materialistic taste and bad habits, and attract our minds to material activities. However, *sad-guru* does not bring such inauspiciousness to me; he really cares about my welfare and is pained to see me sad. Śrī Gurudeva is *para-duḥhka-duḥkhī* (one who experiences distress on seeing the distress of others), and he is our supreme friend (*parama-bandhu*). *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* instructs us to surrender to the lotus feet of such a liberated spiritual master. We should abandon everything that belongs to us and take exclusive shelter at the lotus feet of Gurudeva.

Question 39—Who is the real recipient of service?

Answer—Kṛṣṇa alone is the object of service (*sevya*); He alone is the Lord of all objects and the friend (*sakhā*) of all. He is the only son of all mothers and fathers, and the only husband (*kānta*) of all women. When Kṛṣṇa reveals Himself to someone as the object of worship or service (*sevya-vastu*), that person cannot render service to anyone else.

Kṛṣṇa is the cause of all causes; He is the cause of *Brahman*, *Paramātmā*, and even other incarnations of Viṣṇu.

Question 40—How does one get association with saintly persons?

Answer—When we listen to the pastimes of Lord Hari (*hari-kathā*) attentively—with one-pointed focus of mind—we truly get the association of saintly persons (*sādhusaṅga*). Only when we hear *hari-kathā* from the holy mouth of a saintly person can we understand the power (*vīrya*) of Bhagavān, and the insignificance (*durbalatā*) of the material world. While rendering devotional service as per the instructions of saintly persons, we develop very strong faith, attachment, and love for serving Bhagavān. Indeed, the ultimate goal (*carama-prayojana*) of a living entity is to attain love and affection (*prīti*) for Lord Kṛṣṇa while serving Him.

Question 41—Does one experience obstacles in śreya-patha, the path for one's welfare and auspiciousness?

Answer—Currently, when we see someone pursuing material desires (*preyaḥ-kāmi*), it may seem that he is not experiencing any particular type of distress. On the other hand, those on the path of real self-welfare or devotional service may be encountering many problems. However, by deep consideration it becomes clear that if a practitioner of devotional service (*sādhaka*) tolerates the difficulties that he faces on the path of spiritual welfare (*ātma-kalyāṇa*), then his ultimate well-being is certain. On the contrary, people with worldly desires may appear happy in the beginning, but in the end everything is very painful.

Question 42—What is the difference between a conscious being (*cetana*) and an inanimate object (*acetana*)?

Answer—A nonliving entity (*acid-vastu*) or material object (*jaḍa-vastu*) lacks the ability to know or understand (*jñāna-śakti*), to will or desire (*icchā-śakti*), and to feel or experience (*anubhava-śakti*). [A non-living entity lacks the abilities of knowing, willing, and feeling.] A material object cannot give a conscious response, while a sentient being can. [A material object cannot respond, but a sentient being can.] Trees have a small degree of consciousness, animals have a higher degree, and humans have a still higher degree.

Question 43—Can an ordinary person tell us about Vaikuṇṭha, the spiritual or transcendental world (*para-jagata*)?

Answer—Only a person who comes from Vaikuṇṭha can talk about Vaikuṇṭha; no one of this world can do so. A living entity can know about Vaikuṇṭha only after having the privilege of hearing narrations of Bhagavān's pastimes from the lotus mouth of great personalities who have come from that transcendental world. The things of that world cannot be understood by the limited thinking of this world. It is not appropriate to compare the things of this phenomenal world (*akṣaja*), which can be measured by our senses, with the things of the transcendental world (*adhokṣaja*), which are beyond the measurement of our senses. By good fortune, one may get the association of a great personality who has come from Vaikuṇṭha.

***kṛṣṇa yadi kṛpā kare kona bhāgyavāne
guru-antaryāmi-rūpe śikhāya āpane***

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta)

Meaning: When Kṛṣṇa bestows mercy on some fortunate living entity, He personally teaches that person in the form of the indwelling Supersoul.

Question 44—Why do all people not understand spiritual topics about the ultimate goal of human life?

Answer—Without good fortune, how can they understand? For that, they must have good past

impressions. Only those who are fortunate surrender to the lotus feet of a spiritual master and devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇavas), and listen to narrations of His pastimes. They are able to understand spiritual topics by the mercy of Bhagavān. However, those who do not take sufficient care to study a subject cannot understand its essence. Those who reach a hasty conclusion about ascertaining the absolute truth are unable to understand it. Such persons cannot spare even a little time to study comprehensive knowledge (*pūrṇa-jñāna*) or the truth about the Supreme Lord (*bhagavat-tattva*). We have grown up in a society which is so materialistic that we cannot spare even a moment to investigate what is eternal (*nitya*), or what is spiritual life (*paramārtha*). In other words, since childhood we grew up in a society in which materialism is so prevalent that we cannot spare a moment to discuss eternal or spiritual life. Our twenty-four hours in a day are spent in work or various mundane activities. We do not try to understand who we really are. The scriptures tell us that every moment of human life should be spent in discussing and contemplating spiritual topics. A wise man does not spend his invaluable life trying to satisfy his material senses.

All living entities should think about their well-being; in this way we should be selfish (*svārtha-para*). However, most people only remain engaged in worldly activities. They spend their childhood playing sports and games, their youth executing occupational duties pertaining to household life, and their old-age protecting property and trying to preserve the body. They remain completely indifferent to spiritual life and love of Godhead, which is the ultimate goal of life. This is very unfortunate. Some materialistic people say there's no need to worry about spiritual well-being (*ātma-kalyāṇa*) for the sake of present-day gains (*varṭamāna-svārtha*). However, not studying in childhood leads to many difficulties in adulthood. (If one does not complete school during childhood, one will suffer later during adulthood.)

One concerned for the welfare of society is also concerned for his own welfare along with the welfare of others. One should take special care to ensure that his service to Bhagavān, which is the occupational duty of every living entity, is not hampered by indulgence in sense gratification. Some people advocate avoiding sins (*pāpa-kāryas*) and doing virtuous deeds (*pūṇya-karma*), but this is not enough. A wise man always considers the relationship between his eternal spiritual position and his current (*tātkālika*) duties. When we fail to do so, we will encounter difficulties. Without proper understanding, one must face the consequences of one's current activities in the future. Many types of inconveniences surround you if you do not utilize your time properly. People remain engrossed in the anxieties of family life and this transitory material world (*saṁsāra*) during their youth. They think that in old-age they will contemplate and discuss spiritual topics regarding life after death. However, their well-being will not be attained by such procrastination.

Question 45—Is *varṇāśrama-dharma* eternal?

Answer—Every living entity regards the material body (*jaḍa-deha*), which is merely an outer covering of the soul, to be the soul (*ātmā*). I am a servant of eternal Bhagavān. It is my eternal duty or religion (*dharma*) to serve Bhagavān. I do not belong to any social division (*varṇa*) such as *brāhmaṇa* (twice-born or priest) or *kṣatriya* (warrior), or to any spiritual division (*āśrama*) such as *brahmacārī* (celibate student) or *grhastha* (householder). Therefore, how can *varṇāśrama-dharma* be my eternal *dharma*? By following *varṇāśrama-dharma* properly, one will have a smooth life in this world and in the next. As long as the material body remains, *varṇāśrama-dharma* also remains. This is necessary for the auspiciousness of the global community. It is applicable within the fourteen planetary systems of this universe (*brahmāṇḍa*), according to the particular conditions therein (*aupādhika-sthiti*). However, *varṇāśrama-dharma* does not apply to the

eternal world. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, “I am not a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, or *śūdra*, or a *brahmacārī*, *grhastha*, *vānaprastha*, or *sannyāsī*. My relationship is only with Bhagavān. I am His servant. If I do not forget Him, My life will be totally auspicious.”

Bhagavān is sentient (*cetana*) and the *jīva* (living entity) is also sentient. The *jīva* is a separated part or separate expansion (*vibhinna-aṁśa*) of Bhagavān; he is not *vibhu-cetana* (all-pervading consciousness), but is *aṇu-cetana*, an atomic particle of consciousness. The living entity is dependent on Bhagavān, but in his present state he is abusing his consciousness and free will (*svatantratā*), which is why he is undergoing degradation. When we give up service to Bhagavān we suffer, and when we serve Him we attain auspiciousness.

Question 46—Who is Caitanya Mahāprabhu?

Answer—Caitanyadeva did not first appear two-thousand or ten-thousand years ago; rather, He is an eternal (*nitya*), primeval (*sanātana*) Person. He is Puruṣottama, the Supreme Personality. He is beginningless (*anādī*), is the origin of all (*sarvādī*), and is the cause of all causes. His appearance is not subject to any time limit. The three aspects of time—past, present, and future—manifest from Him. He is the supreme spiritual Person (*vibhu-vastu*), not a mass of bones and flesh. He is the primeval Personality of Godhead (*purāṇa-puruṣa*); He is the Supreme Doer (*puruṣa-karttā*); He is Parabrahman, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān; He is directly Kṛṣṇa. He is the source of all incarnations or *avatāras* (*avatārī*); He is endowed with all opulences (*mahā-bhagavān*); He is the Supreme Lord (*parameśvara*); He is *svayaṁ-bhagavān*.

Śrī Caitanyadeva is an ocean of mercy (*kṛpā-ambudhī*). No one can show mercy like Him; even other incarnations of Bhagavān do not bestow as much mercy. His unprecedented (*apūrva*) mercy bestows qualification on the unqualified, and it is complete and eternal. He is Bhagavān personally giving Himself to us. Such charity

was never granted before, and such a charitable act was never heard of before.

Fruitive workers (*karmīs*), mystics (*yogīs*), and mental speculators or philosophers (*jñānīs*) are completely incapable of experiencing the beauty of the love that He bestowed; only the most fortunate can do so. That is why I say that you should take time to listen to the pastimes of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, leaving aside all other thoughts. One can worship Bhagavān and become peaceful by hearing the pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Who is far beyond an ordinary human being. By such hearing, a desire may arise to have Bhagavān as a son. When the desire of men and women to unite with each other in marriage and have children is replaced by love and devotion for Bhagavān, they are no longer interested in worldly parent-child relationships. [Note: a parent may consider his child to be his own, but in reality a child is a spirit soul who belongs only to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Once a parent develops Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he no longer sees his child as his own, but as a part and parcel of Lord Kṛṣṇa.] Only if we direct all of our emotions (*bhāvas*) towards the feet of Bhagavān will those emotions have real meaning. The five mellows of *śānta* (neutrality), *dāsyā* (servitorship), *sakhya* (friendship), *vātsalya* (parental affection), and *madhura* (conjugal affection) are fully present in Bhagavān. Those whose sentiments are directed towards temporary bodies and objects are unable to know Bhagavān. *Bhagavad-vastu* contains complete knowledge and bliss. We make great efforts to know Bhagavān. The Lord of Goloka, Goloka-pati, has appeared near our home in the form of a human being, Caitanya Mahāprabhu, in order to give us specific instructions. We should greatly endeavor to know Him, but if we do not listen to His words and we make many futile attempts, then how will we be able to attain Him? [In other words, we will not be able to attain Him.]

Question 47—Why did Mahāprabhu say that one of the most important instructions of Śrīmad

Bhagavad-gītā—sarva-dharmān parityajya (“Surrender unto Me, giving up all temporary *dharmas* related to the body and mind”)—is external?

Answer—Mahāprabhu told Rāmānandajī that great statement in *Gītā* is external (*eho bāhya, āge kaha āra*) because devotional service (*bhakti*) is the natural function (*sahaja-vṛtti*) of the soul. For that, God does not have to try to convince someone to become a devotee by giving him a promise letter. A devotee, out of love and affection, is always naturally busy only for the pleasure of Bhagavān.

If a father has to give some incentive to his son in order to receive some service, what is the glory of that son? Instead of a devotee personally serving Bhagavān with a sense of belonging to Him, we see quite the opposite. In other words, Bhagavān has to tell you that you should serve Him, and then He will free you from all sins. Here the devotee has not only forgotten Bhagavān, but has also forgotten himself, his eternal nature, and his eternal existence, and thus he is serving impermanent objects and trying to be a lord over them. That is why Mahāprabhu referred to the important instruction of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* as being external (*eho bāhya*). To indicate the superiority of pure devotional service (*śuddha-bhakti*) and lead to the most exalted topic of *vraja-bhakti*, He said *āge kaha āra*—“Tell Me more; go further.”

Question 48—What is an examination, exactly?

Answer—In order to help students advance, teachers conduct examinations. Students who are assiduous and intelligent enjoy an examination, but those who have no interest in studying become fearful and discouraged at the prospect of an examination. Those who only speak about topics related to objects of sense enjoyment, which appeal to ordinary persons, encounter no resistance, but those who speak to others about service to Bhagavān, about the eternal function of the soul, and about devotional service, which is the treasure of life, face resistance at every step, which may discourage them.

Travelers on the path of devotion (*bhakti-patha*) should know very well that adversities and obstacles come so that they can evaluate their devotional service. [In other words, difficulties come to test our devotion.] Such adversities and obstacles come in order to help us advance on the path of devotional service (*bhakti-mārga*). During difficult times, we should remain steady by remembering the example of Nāmācārya (preceptor of the holy name) Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura, the embodiment of ideal tolerance and forbearance. [In other words, during difficulties we should be inspired by the examples of Nāmācārya Śrī Haridāsa Ṭhākura and Bhaktarāja (best of devotees) Śrī Prahlāda Mahārāja, and strive to remain steadfast.] By endeavoring to obtain temporary objects, we are cheated of our well-being (*ātma-kalyāṇa*) for hundreds of births. If an ordinary person can make great sacrifices for the sake of insignificant sense objects, cannot a wise person or fortunate devotee dedicate this temporary life to Bhagavān, who is the Absolute Truth in past, present, and future (*trikāla-satya-vastu*)? [In other words, if thousands of times non-devotees overcome obstacles and difficulties, and even sacrifice their lives, for trivial matters, cannot an intelligent devotee dedicate this fleeting life to Bhagavān?]

Question 49—Why do people go to places of pilgrimage (*tīrthas*)?

Answer—A *tīrtha* is a pastime place of devotees and Bhagavān. Persons having pious merit (*sukṛti-vāna jana*) go to places of pilgrimage to get association with devotees (*bhakta-saṅga*), service to devotees (*bhakta-sevā*), and service to Bhagavān, which results from the former two. Sinners maintain their tendency to sin, and they go to places of pilgrimage only to avoid the consequences of their sinning, and to gain prestige. However, the *Vaiṣṇava-vṛnda* (devotees), who are beloved to Lord Kṛṣṇa, perform the pastime of visiting places of pilgrimage in order to transform non-pilgrimage sites (*atīrtha*) into pilgrimage sites (*tīrtha*), and to purify

contaminated places of pilgrimage (*malina-tīrthas*). Feeling spiritually intoxicated by service to their Lord, they continue searching for Him in a mood of separation (*vipralambha-rūpa*).

Question 50—Should both renunciation (*tyāga*) and sense enjoyment (*bhoga*) be abandoned?

Answer—Mahāprabhu asked us to renounce both *tyāga* and *bhoga*. *Bhoga* means to enjoy the objects of the senses, such as beautiful forms (*rūpa*), taste (*rasa*), and fragrance (*gandha*), by one's senses including the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin. Although this sense enjoyment gives pleasure for some time, the end result is terrible suffering. That is why renunciation is superior to sense enjoyment. Real renunciation is very good, but in the case of pseudo-renunciation (*kapaṭa-tyāga*), one utters 'neti, neti' ('not this, not this'), abandons the objects of the senses (*viśayas*), and finally abandons even Bhagavān and devotees. Such pseudo-renunciation is actually a form of sense gratification. *Māyāvādīs* (impersonalists or monists) consider the material world to be false (*mithyā*) and regard every object of the material world to be temporary (*anitya*) and false. Thus, they utter 'this is also not real, this is also not real,' renouncing the material world and every object in it. Unfortunately, they consider both Bhagavān and His devotional service (*bhakti*) to be worldly or illusory (*māyika*) things, and thus they abandon them. Considering this material world to be full of misery, they want to be liberated from it. They want to eliminate distress and they think that the bliss of liberation (*mukti-sukha*) is the greatest enjoyment. The idea of the monists that the material world is false and impure like the stool of a crow is utterly mistaken. In reality, this material world is created by Śrī Bhagavān, Who is endowed with all powers or energies. If we regard Bhagavān's material creation to be false, then it means that we do not accept Bhagavān's energy. The real meaning of the scriptures is that all things in the material world are real, but temporary (perishable).

The propensity to enjoy sense objects prevents one from realizing that all material objects are actually instruments meant to serve Bhagavān. It creates the misconception in one's heart that 'I am the enjoyer.' A person trapped in the quagmire of trying to enjoy sense objects considers himself to be the enjoyer and proprietor of the material world. Renunciation also turns one away from devotional service; it also prevents one from understanding that all things in this world are meant for the service of Bhagavān. In renunciation, one feels that all objects of this world cause distress and bondage, so abandoning them is to one's benefit. In this way, one commits an offense to the lotus feet of Bhagavān, to devotional service, and to devotees.

All objects of this world are the opulence and glory of the Lord. Forms and tastes, for example, are objects of the senses, and the senses can never be detached from their sense objects. Even if some people are able to restrain their external senses such as the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin, they may still try to relish sense objects internally via the mind. If one attempts to artificially or prematurely renounce sense objects by becoming detached from the external senses, one will likely experience bodily discomfort or pain. [Someone who wants to give up sense objects may attempt to destroy the sense organs that perceive the sense objects. However, if the sense organs are destroyed before one has actually developed renunciation, one will experience physical discomfort.]

A devotee neither enjoys nor renounces sense objects; he regards them to be objects of Bhagavān's service and engages them in His service. A devotee gives up attachment to sense objects and only accepts what is necessary for the survival of the body. Considering himself to be Bhagavān's servant, he remains continually engaged in His service. Renunciation and sense gratification are not functions (*vṛttis*) of the soul; service (*sevā*) is its only eternal function. Liberated souls are always absorbed in

the service of their Lord in Vaiṣṇava. Fortunate conditioned living entities who want to become free or purified from the conditioned state (*baddha-avasthā*) neither engage the sense objects provided by Bhagavān in their personal sense gratification, nor renounce them, considering them to be a cause of distress. They only accept things that are favorable for Bhagavān's service, and renounce things that are unfavorable.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda vandanā

namaḥ oṃ viṣṇupādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhūtale

śrīmate bhaktisiddhānta-sarasvatīti nāmine (1)

śrī-vārṣabhānavī-devī-dayitāya kṛpābdhaye

kṛṣṇa-sambandha-vijñāna-dāyine prabhava namaḥ (2)

I offer *praṇāma* time and again unto the master who bestows the science of Kṛṣṇa, who is very dear to Kṛṣṇa, who is the recipient of Śrī Vārṣabhānavī-devī Rādhikā's mercy, who is an ocean of mercy, and who appeared on this Earth as *oṃ viṣṇupāda* Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda.

***mādhuryojjvala-premāḍhya-śrī-rūpānuga-bhaktida-
śrī-gaura-karuṇā-śakti-vigrahāya namo 'stu te (3)***

I offer *praṇāma* unto he who is the embodiment of that *rūpānuga-bhakti* which is radiant with the conjugal love of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and who is the personification of Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu's mercy potency.

***namas te gaura-vāṇī-śrī-mūrtaye dīna-tāriṇe
rūpānuga-viruddhā 'pasiddhānta-dhvānta-hāriṇe (4)***

I offer *praṇāma* unto he who is the embodiment of Mahāprabhu's teachings, who is the deliverer of the fallen, and who is the annihilator of the darkness arising from misconceptions which are opposed to the philosophy enunciated by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.

Question 51—Who is Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhu?

Answer—Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī is an eternally perfect associate of Bhagavān. He is a *jagad-guru* (spiritual master of the whole world) and leader of all devotees. He is the *gopī* (cowherd damsel) known as Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī in *kṛṣṇa-līlā* (Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes). He is a confidential devotee of Śrī Gaurasundara. He is not an ordinary living entity (*jīva-tattva* or marginal potency), but is part of the *svarūpa-śakti-tattva* (internal potency) of the Lord of the living entities. He is a beloved maidservant of Śrīmatī Rādhikājī.

A speciality of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī is that he was the most beloved devotee of Śrī Gaurasundara. [Compared to other devotees of Śrī Gaurasundara, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī has special characteristics.] No one could understand the feelings in Lord Gaurāṅga's heart like he could. The most confidential sentiments of Śrī Gaurasundara's heart can manifest only in the heart of living entities who are followers of Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī and Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī. Everyone is indebted to Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī. As long as the Śrī Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* exists in this world, no one will be able to forget the unprecedented contribution of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmījī.

Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhu is an object of our eternal worship. He lives on the lap, chest, and head of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa always carries him on His shoulder and head; he is very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa. We only aspire for the dust of his lotus feet. Our hope and faith are only at the lotus feet of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī.

How can Kṛṣṇa's service be attained? Śrī Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī Prabhu said that His service is attained only by the grace of Śrī Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmījī.

The farther away we are from the lotus feet of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, the farther away we are from the lotus feet of Lord Śrī Gaurasundara. Only those who follow in the footsteps of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmījī are qualified for

devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmījī is the living ideal of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. In the eyes of ordinary historians, he was a disciple of his elder brother Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī. However, even Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī aspired for the mercy of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmījī. Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmījī said that one who is not a recipient of the mercy of Rūpa Gosvāmījī cannot attain service to Śrī Rādhā Govinda.

When followers of *karma-kāṇḍa* and *brahma-jñāna* tried to suppress devotional service, there was a need of Śrī Gaurasundara's commanders-in-chief to destroy their power. At that time, there were two prominent commanders under Lord Caitanya: Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī. Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī was the commander-in-chief and the Rūpānuga Vaiṣṇavas were his army. Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī was the lord of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas; he alone consolidated the army in order to defeat the *karmī*, *jñānī*, and *yogīsampradāyas*, whose members had extraneous desires and were opposed to the practice of devotional service.

That Rūpānuga army did not have ordinary weapons or missiles; its only weapon was *kīrtana*. Lord Śrī Gaurasundara empowered Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī in Prayāga and taught him how to defeat the sects opposed to devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, and how one can protect oneself from distress.

By diligently discussing and studying how those commanders fought the war with the help of their army of devotees, we can also fire back against the teachings and opinions of the sects opposed to devotional service. In this way we can eliminate *asad-vṛtti* (tendency to adopt the bad behavior and character of nondevotees), *karmāgraha* (abandoning one's prescribed duties or adopting duties meant for others), *phala-kāmanā* (propensity to expect material fruits or results), *anyābhilāṣitā* (perpetual desires other than the aspiration to bring happiness to Śrī Kṛṣṇa), *pāṣaṇḍatā* (heresy and heterodoxy), *nāstikatā* (atheism), and *biddha-bhāva* (mixed mood).

Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī was like a lion in the army of Rūpānuga Vaiṣṇavas. He refuted all *asat* (untrue) doctrines using the arrows of his unerring opinions. Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrī Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī were followers of Śrī Rūpa, the commander. We can discover the valuable legacy that Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī entrusted to his followers by submissively approaching the writings of Śrī Narottama Ṭhākura and Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura.

We get that priceless wealth of devotional service coming from Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī only if we desire it sincerely without duplicity. When we attain his qualities of *saundarya* (beauty), *mādhurya* (sweetness), and *alaukikīāsāmānyā ahaṭukī amandoda dayā-kṛpā-parākāṣṭhā* (topmost causeless mercy and kindness that bestows good fortune), we will have no regard (*ānugatya*) for *kurūpa* (ugliness) or *virūpa* (deformity), and we will only see *surūpa* (splendor) and *sudarśana* (lovely pastimes) everywhere. People all over the world have become mad for superficial worldly beauty; however, when we can recognize that such apparent beauty is actually ugly, we will spit at it.

The spiritual form by which one renders service to Lord Kṛṣṇa is now covered by *upādhi* (material designation). There are two types of *upādhis*—mental designation (*mānasika-upādhi*) and physical or bodily designation (*śārīrika-upādhi*). Unaware of their spiritual form, conditioned souls become a *karmī* (fruitive worker), *anyābhilāṣī* (one with desires other than to serve Kṛṣṇa), *jñānī* (speculative philosopher), or *yogī* (mystic transcendentalist). At various times one thinks he is a human being (*manuṣya*), demigod (*devatā*), priest or scholar (*paṇḍita*), fool (*mūrkhā*), rich person (*dhanī*), poor person, father, son, *brāhmaṇa*, or monk (*sannyāsī*). Wealth and prosperity, beautiful bodies of women, and prestige attract us—what will we not do to achieve them? Will we aspire even one time to see the beautiful Śrī Gaurasundara described by Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī?

One can access the lotus feet of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī through loving eyes and the inclination to render humble devotional service that is free from duplicity. When our devotional service (*bhajana*), worship (*pūjana*), possessions (*sarvasva*), and current and future lifetimes are dedicated to the lotus feet of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, we can fully attain Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Thus, the lotus feet of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī are our only hope and anchor, and his mercy is our only shelter. This is our prayer:

***ādadānas tṛṇaṁ dantair idaṁ yāce punaḥ punaḥ
śrīmad rūpa-padāmbhoja dhūliḥ syāṁ janma-janmani***

Meaning: Holding a piece of straw between my teeth, I pray very humbly and submissively that I may become a particle of dust at the lotus feet of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī lifetime after lifetime.

Question 52—What is the difference between *karma* (worldly action) and *līlā* (spiritual pastimes)?

Answer—There is a difference of Heaven and Earth between *karma* and *līlā*. *Karma* involves the material senses, while *līlā* involves the spiritual senses that are inclined to render service. The material world is the ground for *karma*, the basis of which is a gross or subtle material body (*anītya-śarīra*). [*Karma* takes place in the material world by the gross or subtle body.] *Karma* is temporary because it is performed by the temporary body. Spiritual pastimes are eternal and they involve spiritual senses. *Karma* is like a punishment (*daṇḍa-svarūpa*) for the *māyā-baddha-jīvas* (living entities bound by the illusory potency), and it is the cause of the threefold miseries (*tri-tāpa-bhoga*). On the contrary, *līlā* are blissful, playful activities arising from the unbridled desire of *sarva-tantra-sva-tantra* Puruṣottama, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The realms of spiritual pastimes are Vaikuṇṭha and Goloka, which are situated beyond the fourteen planetary systems (*bhū-loka*, *bhuvar-loka*) of the material world, even beyond the Virajā River and Brahma-loka or Mukti-loka, the abode of liberation. The spiritual pastimes

may be introduced into the material world by the arrangement and desire of Bhagavān's pastime potency (*līlā-śakti*). However, those spiritual pastimes are not tainted by worldly qualities because they are transcendental to the scope of mundane senses and inconceivable in nature. This is the conception (*vicāra*) of Gauḍīya philosophy (*Gauḍīya-darśana*).

Question 53—Is *prakṛti* (material nature) or *māyā* (the illusory potency) the original reason for the creation of the material world?

Answer—The illusory potency consisting of the modes of material nature (*guṇa-mayī māyā*) cannot be the original cause of the material world. Only when power is transmitted by Mahā-viṣṇu through His glance can *guṇa-mayī māyā* act as the secondary cause (*gauṇa-kāraṇa*) of the creation of the material world. When an iron rod is put into fire, the heat energy enters the iron, and then the iron develops the capacity to burn. Material nature creates the material world only after being infused with the energy of the Lord. By themselves, the material elements are like the unproductive nipples on the neck of a goat. [Note: the nipples on the neck of a she-goat do not give milk, while the nipples on her udder do. Similarly, the material nature (*prakṛti*) or illusory potency (*māyā*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa appears to be the cause of this material world because she provides the ingredients for its construction. However, actually Lord Mahā-viṣṇu is the real creator of this material world.] Considering *guṇa-rūpa-aśā*, *māyā* is the *nimitta-kāraṇa*, or efficient cause, and Kṛṣṇa alone is the *mūla-nimitta-kāraṇa*, or original efficient cause. Nārāyaṇa is the principal efficient cause and *māyā* is the secondary efficient cause, like a potter is the principal efficient cause of a pot, and the *cakra-daṇḍa* (potter's wheel and rod) is the secondary efficient cause. Just as an earthen pot cannot be created without a potter, the material world cannot be created without Kṛṣṇa. Thus, Bhagavān is the original cause of the creation of the material world, and

māyā is the secondary cause. *Kāraṇa-arṇava-śāyī puruṣa* (Lord Mahā-viṣṇu Who sleeps in the causal ocean) glances towards *māyā*, and this has two results. First, innumerable living entities, who are like particles in His divine rays, enter into *māyā*. Second, He touches *māyā* with the shadow of His limb and creates innumerable universes (*brahmāṇḍas*). His limb does not directly touch *māyā*; only its shadow touches *māyā*. Thus, Bhagavān is never in direct contact with *māyā*. The ideology of the monists and impersonalists that when Bhagavān descends to this world, He is in touch with the illusory potency and influenced by her is not correct. Kṛṣṇa Himself enters every universe in a particular *svarūpa* (form), so He alone is the original cause of the universe. Scripture says:

***kṛṣṇa-śaktye prakṛti haya gauṇa-kāraṇa
agni-śaktye lauha yaicche karaye jāraṇa***

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*)

[Thus *prakṛti*, by the energy of Lord Kṛṣṇa, becomes the secondary cause, just as iron becomes red-hot by the energy of fire.]

Outside the spiritual sky of Vaikuṇṭha (*para-vyoma*) is the effulgent abode of *Brahman* (*jyotirmayabrahma-dhāma*) and outside it is the causal ocean (*kāraṇa-samudra*). The spiritual abode (*cinmaya-dhāma*) is devoid of cause (*kāraṇa-śunya*), but is itself cause (*kāraṇa-mayī*). Between Vaikuṇṭha and Brahman is the causal ocean of spiritual water or *cinmaya-jala* (*cinmaya-jalanidhi kāraṇa-samudra*). When Bhagavān, Who is sleeping in the causal ocean, glances at *māyā*, who is outside the causal ocean, creation and activities in the universe begin. *Māyā* cannot touch the causal ocean; thus, Bhagavān's glance enters and activates *māyā*.

Question 54—Whose service is best for us?

Answer—In *Padma-Purāṇa*, Lord Śiva tells Pārvatī:

***ārādhanaṇām sarveṣāṁ viṣṇor ārādhanaṁ param
tasmāt parataraṁ devi tadīyānām samarcanam***

Among all types of worship prevalent in the world, worship of Lord Śrī Hari is the best. Worship of devotees who themselves worship the most worshipable Lord Śrī Hari is even superior. [Worship (*pūjā*) of Lord Śrī Hari is the best type of worship, but superior to even that is worship of His devotees.] Bhagavān personally worships His own devotees. Bhagavān is the most worshipable personality. His loving devotees (*premī bhagavad-bhaktas*) are the receptacles of His worship and love. Śrī Gurudeva is the foremost devotee of Bhagavān. Therefore, it is very clear that the service to and worship of those personalities whom Bhagavān worships is best.

Mad-guruḥ jagad-guruḥ, man-nāthaḥ jagan-nāthaḥ —“My spiritual master is the spiritual master of the whole world. Those who are inimical to my spiritual master are also inimical to Bhagavān and the whole world, including every human being.” A disciple is not a true servant of his spiritual master (*guru-sevaka*) until the mood arises in his heart that, “My spiritual master is the spiritual master of the whole world.” Unless such a mood arises, he cannot surrender to the feet of Śrī Gurudeva and glorify Lord Hari (perform *hari-kīrtana*) with an attitude of being more humble than a blade of grass, giving respect to everyone, and not expecting any respect in return. A spiritual practitioner (*sādhaka*) must develop firm faith that: (1) no activity is as auspicious as serving one’s spiritual master, and (2) worship of Bhagavān is the best type of worship, and service to Śrī Gurudeva is superior to that worship. In the absence of such firm faith and conviction, he cannot truly accept shelter at the lotus feet of a spiritual master, and the mood will not arise that, “I am a surrendered soul (*āśrita*); Gurudeva is my only shelter (*āśraya*), maintainer (*pālaka*), and protector (*rakṣaka*).” ***Sarvasvaṁ gurave dadyāt***—according to these words of scripture, we must offer all of our possessions (*sarvasva*) to the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva, and serve him with our life-airs (*prāṇa*), wealth (*artha*), intelligence (*buddhi*), words (*vākya*), mind (*mana*), knowledge (*vidyā*), and body (*śarīra*). Unless we

do this: we cannot be free from attachment to sense objects (*viṣayas*), we cannot become selfless, we cannot become free from the material disease of *sva-kāmanā* (desire for sense gratification), and we cannot shed our *bhaya* (fear), *cintā* (anxiety), *duḥkha* (distress), and *moha* (illusion). One can become free from bewilderment, fear, and lamentation by taking complete shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva. If we are without duplicity and we want to obtain mercy, then Śrī Guru-pāda-padma (lotus feet of the spiritual master) will sincerely bestow upon us all auspiciousness.

Śrī Gurudeva does not belong to the mortal world; he is an immortal, eternal personality. Śrī Gurudeva is eternal (*nitya*), his service is eternal, and his servants are eternal. How can we not have great hope that nothing perishable is ours? [We should have firm hope and trust that no perishable object in this material world belongs to us.] In other words, we should place our hope and confidence only in the eternal lotus feet of the spiritual master and his servitors, and not in perishable material objects.

We are the subordinate principle (*vaśya-tattva* or *adhīna-tattva*), and Śrī Gurudeva is the controlling principle (*īśvara-vastu* or *sevaka-bhagavān*, the Supreme Personality of Servitorship). Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *viṣaya-vigraha* (object of a devotee's *prema*) and Śrī Gurudeva is *āśraya-vigraha* (manifestation of the Lord of whom we take shelter), and by taking Śrī Gurudeva's shelter we can attain Bhagavān. While *svayaṁ-bhagavān* Kṛṣṇa is *viṣaya-vigraha*, He is also present in the form of *āśraya-vigrahaguru-tattva*. While Śrī Gurudeva is a manifestation of *īśvara* or Bhagavān, he also serves Bhagavān and instructs us about His service. Currently, we are attached to the material world and we feel a sense of proprietorship, and as a result we experience so much distress and anxiety. Gurudeva can protect us from this sense of proprietorship, but do we want that protection? No, we want to remain trapped in this material world. If we really

wanted liberation from material existence, we would never tire of serving Śrī Gurudeva, who is Bhagavān's representative, manifestation, and incarnation, by body, mind, and soul. [If we had the desire to be free from the material world, then our mind would not be satisfied even if we wholeheartedly served Gurudeva, who is a representative, manifestation, and incarnation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.] Is our mood (*citta-vṛtti*) becoming like this? What to speak of giving sixteen *ānās* (100%) to Gurudeva, we are not inclined to give even one *ānā* (6%). If we do not value the essence (*sāra-vastu*), how will we find it? Gurudeva is the *sāra-vastu*, so if we do not take shelter of him, we cannot attain Bhagavān, who is the complete *sāra-vastu*. We are experiencing degradation and ever-increasing attachment to material existence only because we do not see Śrī Gurudeva as Bhagavān's representative (*bhagavat-buddhi*). Therefore, I say that you should not regard Śrī Gurudeva as an ordinary, mortal human being. He can give you immortality; he is the doctor who can cure the disease of material existence. He is your selfless protector, guardian, benefactor, and friend.

If we are unwilling to take complete shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva, to the degree that we are duplicitous we will be cheated. We should always keep this in mind; otherwise, despite taking shelter of a bona fide spiritual master, we will not benefit much. The most auspicious Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra has placed us in the hands of the spiritual master, but if we do not take full shelter of his lotus feet and do not completely surrender to him, and instead engage in duplicity by not offering all of our possessions to him, then how can he bestow complete auspiciousness upon us? If we remain attached to the material world and externally pretend to engage in devotional service just to show off, the omniscient Śrī Gurudeva will understand our pretence and cheat us—*yādṛśī bhāvanā yasya siddhir-bhavati tādṛśī*—"Perfection is attained according to one's faith." If we do not serve a spiritual master and devotees of Kṛṣṇa, thus cheating

them, and instead we remain busy serving our friends and relatives, Śrīla Gurudeva, who is *antaryāmī* (present in everyone's heart), mercifully tries to correct us by saying: "You have not truly become my disciple; you do not accept my instructions; you do not obey my orders. There is sin in your heart. Your ears are not worthy of hearing my words because you have listened to the advice, ideals, and conceptions of treacherous worldly people. Thus, you are cheated."

Therefore, I say again that whatever orders and instructions Śrī Gurudeva sincerely and compassionately gives us, we should respectfully accept and bow down our head. Otherwise, we will certainly face inauspicious things. O my brothers, do not become sense enjoyers; do not try to enjoy sense objects with your senses. This entire world is meant for serving the spiritual master, and the ultimate recipient of that service is Kṛṣṇa. One cannot attain auspiciousness by trying to enjoy things that are meant to serve the spiritual master. We will inevitably face inauspiciousness if we do not see every object as meant for his service.

Question 55—Prabhupāda, please mercifully explain the meaning of the verse "*sarva dharmāṇ parityajya māmekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*" of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*.

Answer—In *Bhagavad-gītā*, Śrī Bhagavān advises us to give up all types of religion and take shelter at His lotus feet. In that same *Bhagavad-gītā*, Bhagavān explains, "It is inauspicious for one to give up his prescribed duties and do someone else's (*para-dharma*). It is better to die while performing one's prescribed religious duties. It is inappropriate and dangerous to follow the religious duties prescribed for others." Here, Bhagavān Himself tells us to give up all religion. How can we reconcile His apparently contradictory words? One cannot understand Bhagavān Puruṣottama by his own knowledge, intelligence, and foresight. One can understand Bhagavān only by the

mercy of Bhagavān. We must discuss Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the form of Kṛṣṇa Who manifests the most magnanimous pastimes (*audārya-maya-līlā*). Although He is Kṛṣṇa Himself, He appeared in this world to preach about the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. We must hear those pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa as narrated by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Only then can we obtain a complete answer to this question. After accepting the renounced order of life, Mahāprabhu stayed at the home of Candra-śekhara. At that time, Śākara Mallika (Śrī Sanātana Prabhu), the prime minister of the King of Bengal Husaina Śāha, came to see Him. He asked Mahāprabhu:

***ke āmi, kena āmāya jāre tāpatraya
ihā nāhi jāni—kemane hīta haya***

Meaning: “O Lord! Please mercifully tell me who I am and why *ādhi-daivika*, *ādhi-bhautika*, and *ādhyātmika*—the three types of afflictions—are giving me trouble. How can I attain auspiciousness? I do not know this.”

Mahāprabhu replied:

***jīvera svarūpa haya kṛṣṇera nitya dāsa
kṛṣṇera taṭasthā śakti bhedābheda prakāśa
kṛṣṇa bhuli sei jīva anādi bahirmukha
ataeva māyā tāre deya saṁsārādi duḥkha
sādhū śāstra kṛpāya yadi kṛṣṇonmukha haya
sei jīva nistare māyā tāhāre chāḍaya
tāte kṛṣṇa bhaje kare gurura sevana
māyā jāla chuṭe pāya kṛṣṇera caraṇa***

Meaning: “The nature (*svarūpa*) of the living entity is to be an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa, and he is manifest from the marginal potency (*taṭasthā-śakti*) of Kṛṣṇa. The marginal potency is simultaneously different and non-different from Kṛṣṇa. Having forgotten Kṛṣṇa, the living entities have become averse to Him since time without a beginning. As a result, the illusory potency (*māyā*) brings upon them innumerable types of worldly distress. If by good fortune one becomes favorable to Kṛṣṇa by the mercy of *sādhus* (saintly persons) and scriptures, one starts to become free from the snare of the illusory

potency. Then one renders devotional service to Kṛṣṇa and one's spiritual master, and as a result one's bondage from the illusory potency ends and one attains the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.

Living entities are servants of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa; Kṛṣṇa is their eternal Lord. Serving Kṛṣṇa is the primary, eternal duty of living entities. According to the scriptures, we are not this material body; we are atomic particles of consciousness (*aṇu-caitanya*), a soul (*ātmā*). Having forgotten this scriptural knowledge, we regard this body and mind to be 'I', and consequently numerous types of problems besiege us. We regard our ancestry and the country in which the body was born to be ours. We think ourselves to be a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, *śūdra*, *mleccha*, woman, etc. According to the transformation in the body and the age of the body, we consider ourselves to be a child (*bālaka*), old person (*vṛddha*), or youth (*yuvaka*). Mistaking our material body to be our true self, we consider ourselves to be Muslims or residents of a place such as Bhārata (India), Bengal, England, Māravāḍa, Panjāba (Punjab), or Bihāra (Bihar). Moreover, due to false ego we identify with a particular *āśrama*—*brahmacārī*, *grhastha*, or *sannyāsī*. These various identifications or designations have given rise to the different religions of the world.

The speaker of *Śrī Bhagavad-gītā* is Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa Himself. He tells that the *ātmā* (soul) is eternal and immutable. The body is temporary and undergoes growth and decay. Those who think that the birth, change, and death of the body also apply to the soul are ignorant. In this verse, *sarva-dharma* refers to religions and duties connected with the body and mind, and it applies to those who confuse the mind and body with the real self, or soul. Here, the term *sarva-dharma* concerns the four varṇas or social divisions (*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, and *śūdra*) and the four *āśramas* or spiritual divisions (*brahmacarya*, *grhastha*, *vānaprastha*, and *sannyāsa*). It also refers to outcast religion (*antyaja-dharma*), mundane religion

centered around personal sense gratification, and religion focused on attaining the next world by renunciation; that is, all religions other than that of serving Lord Kṛṣṇa that are present in the fourteen planetary systems. It is these types of religion that Kṛṣṇa tells us to abandon.

Thus, one should give up the temporary religion (*anitya-dharma*) of the body and mind, and render service to Bhagavān, which is the eternal constitutional duty (*nitya-dharma*) of the soul. Merciful Bhagavān has kindly given these instructions to us. However, a living entity who is bewildered by the illusory potency cannot easily accept these instructions. The second line of the same verse gives evidence for this: Bhagavān says ***ahaṁ tvāṁ sarva pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi***—“I shall free you from all sins.” When a living entity in pursuit of the eternal religion of serving Bhagavān tries to give up the temporary *dharma* of the material body and mind, he initially thinks, due to material attachment and bewilderment, that he will incur sin by giving up all of these temporary *dharmas*. Actually, it is by not following the eternal *dharma* of serving Bhagavān that one makes great offense and incurs great sin. Alas! Alas! What a matter of distress it is that living entities bound by the illusory potency (*māyā*) become indifferent to their eternal *dharma* (*nitya-dharma*), regard their temporary duties to be eternal, and think that it is sinful and lamentable to give up these temporary duties for the sake of serving Bhagavān. Therefore, in this verse Bhagavān reassures such living entities that they need not fear incurring sin from giving up their temporary duties, because He will free them from all sins.

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa personally came to this world and spoke about devotional service to Bhagavān. However, are we obeying His orders? Are we following His instructions? If we do not follow His orders; if we do not listen to the words of the scriptures; if we behave according to the whims of our mind; if we regard non-duty as duty and duty as non-duty; if we disrespect the words of saintly persons, spiritual masters, and scriptures and try to

ascertain by ourselves what our duty is—then whose fault is it?

Question 56—How do we keep unwanted habits (*anarthas*) far away from us?

Answer—Due to not performing devotional service to Hari (*hari-bhajana*), a living entity becomes a *karmī* (fruitive worker), *jñānī* (mental speculator), or *anya-abhilāṣī* (one having extraneous desires). Therefore, we should always call out to Bhagavān by uttering the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. When we chant the holy names of Lord Hari (*hari-nāma*) daily according to a fixed number of rounds, gradually all unwanted habits (*anarthas*) go away, including laziness (*ālasya*) and unresponsiveness or stupidity (*jāḍya*). One naturally attains all types of mystic perfections (*siddhis*) by chanting the holy names of Lord Hari without offense.

Question 57—How should we live?

Answer—Nondevotees who are averse to Lord Kṛṣṇa and devotional service to Him always engage in meaningless worldly talks (*grāmya-kathā*). We should not engage in such talks. If we truly desire to advance on the path of serving Bhagavān, which is our prime duty, no obstacle or calamity can deter us even slightly. We should respect nondevotees, but we should not be influenced by their behavior. We should reject them in our mind. One must read books such as *Śaraṇāgati*, *Prārthanā*, and *Prema-bhakti-candrikā*. Associating with saintly persons by reading their scriptural compilations (*śāstrīya-sādhusaṅga*) is truly beneficial. Education about devotional service (*bhajana*) and association with saintly personalities (*sādhusaṅga*) are very much needed.

Question 58—What is the meaning of *ṭṛnād api sunīcatā*?

Answer—Although Vaiṣṇavas are the most noble persons, they consider themselves to be lower than a

blade of grass. In fact, they are not inferior or lowly, but they are the recipients of Bhagavān's love. [Despite feeling lowly (*adhama*) and inferior (*nīca*), they are recipients of Bhagavān's love.] Devotees are worshipable for everyone. Thus, this verse includes the word *sunīca* (humbler) instead of *nīca* (inferior). "I am the foot-dust of *guru-pāda-padma*, the lotus feet of Gurudeva. I am a servant of my spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa." Such is the transcendental mood of *ṭṛṇād api sunīcatā* (more humble than a blade of grass). Mahāprabhu preached giving mercy to the living entities, developing taste for chanting the holy name, and serving Vaiṣṇavas. Hypocrisy is not within *ṭṛṇād api sunīcatā*; humility is not mere words or superficial pretending. This humility is the qualification needed to perform true *kīrtana*; that is, to have taste for chanting the holy name and to have the conception of being a servant of the holy name. Service to *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is the door to taste (*ruci*) in the holy name; it is at the heart of *ṭṛṇād api sunīcatā*. One should not exhibit humility in front of non-devotees, but only before Vaiṣṇavas, begging mercy from them. One should not exhibit humility in front of everyone; this is the advice of exalted personalities (*mahā-puruṣas*). *Ṭṛṇād api sunīcatā* does not include exhibiting humility before persons who are inimical to Guru and Vaiṣṇavas, such as Rāvaṇa or a hypocritical *brāhmaṇa*. One who displays such improper humility will not develop the qualification (*adhikāra*) to perform *kīrtana* or develop taste for the holy name, as this is actually committing spiritual harm to a living entity. Hanumānjī, a great devotee of Rāma, burnt Laṅkā to ashes—this activity is truly *ṭṛṇād api sunīcatā*.

Question 59—Is everything that Bhagavān does auspicious?

Answer—Certainly. Everything the merciful does is mercy. There can be nothing inauspicious in the arrangements of the auspicious Lord (*maṅgala-maya*); whatever Bhagavān does is auspicious. Conditioned living

entities who consider impediments to their sense gratification to be inauspicious only see one roll of the dice; they have no idea what will happen in the fourth or fifth roll (move).

The mercy of Śrī Caitanyadeva and His devotees is *amandodaya*—no one is actually offended, injured, or wronged. There can be no inauspiciousness in their mercy. When a doctor gives bitter medicine to a patient, the patient may accuse the doctor of being cruel, but when the disease is cured, the patient can understand the doctor's mercy.

Question 60—What does *namaḥ* mean in a *mantra*?

Answer—The word *namaḥ* means to surrender or offer obeisances with humility, giving up one's false ego or independence. "O Gurudeva! O Kṛṣṇa! From today onwards, I have become your *āśrita-sevaka* (servant who has taken refuge at Your lotus feet). You should mercifully guide me and engage me in Your service. I have completely abandoned my false ego—the conception of being the doer (*kartṛtva*). Now, may your orders, precepts, and instructions guide my life. This is my only prayer."

Namaskāra (offering obeisances) means to give up the false ego which gives rise to conceptions such as 'I am the doer,' 'I am the enjoyer,' 'I am the director,' and 'I am the maintainer.' When the misconception that 'I am the doer' is removed by the mercy of Śrī Gurudeva, a disciple is eligible to receive true initiation (*dīkṣā*) and divine knowledge.

The wise obtain perfection (*siddhi*) by rendering intimate (loving) service to Śrī Gurudeva, who is dear to Kṛṣṇa. [It is a sign of intelligence to render intimate service to Śrī Gurudeva, who is dear to Kṛṣṇa, for as long as he is manifest (*prakaṭa*) in this world.]

We will be cheated:

1. if we do not attain perfection (*siddhi*) by developing deep love and affection for Śrī Gurudeva, who

is a divine, worshipable and immortal (*ati-martya*) personality; and

2. if we do not sincerely serve him in a selfless mood, regarding him to be the worshipable lord of our hearts.

“Despite finding my only true protector, rescuer, and friend, who has no material designations, by misfortune I lost him. How unfortunate I am! Although I found the bank of the Ganges, I am again looking for water in the desert. Despite discovering a treasure of jewels, I am again becoming bewitched by shining pieces of glass in an alluring store due to my worldly desires. What a sad situation and total ruination (*sarva-nāśa*) this is!”

Those who are very intelligent become free from duplicity, devoid of extraneous desires, and fully determined to follow Śrī Gurudeva’s teachings (*ānugatya-maya jīvana*) by surrendering unto his lotus feet. Those who do not do so will be cheated.

Question 61—How does one receive *darśana* (vision) of Bhagavān?

Answer—Bhagavān is self-effulgent. He is an ocean of mercy. When a living entity becomes inclined to render service, Bhagavān shows mercy and reveals various aspects of Himself, such as His form and color, within the consciousness of that living entity.

One in the mood of an enjoyer is absorbed in the pride of being the doer. One cannot have *darśana* of Bhagavān, even by hard endeavor, if one has the false ego of being the doer. His *darśana* is only possible in a heart purified by hearing from the lotus mouth of a spiritual master and Vaiṣṇavas. Mundane knowledge cannot bring a transcendental vision of Bhagavān. As Bhagavān is conscious, His *darśana* can only be attained through consciousness, using spiritual eyes (*cinmaya-cakṣu*). A servant, by his own effort, cannot impel his master to appear before him; the recipient of service (*sevya*), by mercy, can give *darśana* to his servant (*sevaka*). Initially,

darśana of Bhagavān is given within one's heart (*antar-darśana*), and thereafter it takes place face-to-face (*bahir-darśana*).

Question 62—Why can't we fully depend on Bhagavān?

Answer—We are atomic particles of consciousness (*aṇu-cetana*), and it is our nature to take shelter of the complete conscious being, Śrī Bhagavān (*br̥hat-cetana*). We are unable to develop faith in Bhagavān due to being absorbed in the objects of the material world. Only those who do not aspire for any worldly object, who are devoid of material possessions, and who do not depend on any object of the mundane world can have faith in Bhagavān and depend on Him. We can be completely dependent on Bhagavān by listening to powerful narrations from saintly persons, who are living scriptures.

Question 63—When will our lives be auspicious?

Answer—Our lives will be auspicious only when we hear about the pastimes of Bhagavān from the mouth of saintly persons, and follow in their footsteps. If pottery work is to be done, work is started only after getting educated from an expert potter. [If you want to be a potter, you must be trained by a qualified potter.] If you want to be a confectioner, you must learn the art of making sweets from a qualified confectioner. If you try to be successful independently, without consulting an experienced, knowledgeable person, you will face many obstacles and failures; such a mentality indicates that one does not understand the real meaning of the scriptures, and one is under the influence of ignorance. At that time, without understanding the real meaning of the scriptures, one is only capable of mental concoctions.

Our duty is to take shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī *Guru-pāda-padma*, the lotus feet of the spiritual master. Truth cannot be obtained without adopting a disciplic

succession or *guru-paramparā* (*āmnāya-dhārā*). We cannot have *darśana* of Bhagavān without bathing in the foot-dust of a great personality who is devoid of material possessions. Only Vaiṣṇavas can protect us from *bhogyadarśana* or *ku-darśana*. [*Bhogyadarśana* or *ku-darśana* means to see the material world as an object for one's personal enjoyment and not as an object for Lord Kṛṣṇa's service.] As soon as we take shelter of the lotus feet of the spiritual master and become his property, and make service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*) our life, we realize actual truth.

Question 64—Who are sense gratifiers (*viṣayīs*)?

Answer—Those who collect sense objects (*viṣayas*) for their own happiness and regard those sense objects as instruments for their sense gratification are *viṣayīs*. Those who collect worldly sense objects (*jāgatika-viṣayas*) for the service of Bhagavān are not *viṣayīs*; rather, they are servants of Bhagavān. It is not possible to recognize sense gratifiers (*bhogīs*) and devotees (*bhaktas*) only by their external activities. They can be recognized by their intentions. Those who eat to satisfy their own senses are *bhogīs*, while those who eat to maintain the body for service to Bhagavān are devotees. [Those who eat for their sense gratification are sense gratifiers (*bhogīs*), while those who eat only to protect the body for the purpose of serving the Lord are devotees.] A devotee is neither a *bhogī* nor *tyāgī* (renunciate); devotees are servants of Bhagavān. They engage their wealth, sense objects, and various worldly things in serving Bhagavān.

Question 65—Is *śrī-nāma-saṅkīrtana* the main devotional service (*mukhya-bhajana*)?

Answer—According to the spiritual conclusions (*siddhānta*) of Śrīman Mahāprabhu and our Gosvāmī-varga, *śrī-nāma-saṅkīrtana* is the main devotional service. *Kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana* is the best among all the limbs of devotional service (*bhakti*) including *śravaṇa*, *kīrtana*,

smaraṇa, *vandana*, and *arcana*. The other limbs such as *śravaṇa* and *smaraṇa* are under the control of *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. Revelation (*sphūrti*) of the pastimes is only possible if one receives the mercy of the holy name. It is mundane pride (*jaḍa-pratiṣṭhā*) if one gives up *kīrtana* (loud glorification of Lord Kṛṣṇa) and attempts to engage in *smaraṇa* (remembrance). *Kīrtana* cannot be fabricated by an ordinary human being (*sādhāraṇa-manuṣya*); such imitation *kīrtana* does not satisfy Kṛṣṇa and it is an offense to the holy name (*nāma-aparādha*). It can only satisfy one's own senses. This is sense gratification or offense in the name of devotional service. *Śrī-nāma-saṅkīrtana* emanating from the lotus mouth of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is real devotional service. One attains love for Kṛṣṇa only through such *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. Therefore, *nāma-saṅkīrtana* is regarded by saintly persons as the best devotional service (*śreṣṭha-tama bhajana*). When the self-manifest nectar of the holy name arises in one of the senses which is inclined to render devotional service, it satisfies all of the senses with its sweet mellow (*madhura-rasa*). In this regard, Bhagavān Śrī Gaurāṅga-deva said:

***bhajanera madhye śreṣṭha nava-vidhā bhakti
'kṛṣṇa-prema', 'kṛṣṇa' dite dhare mahā-śakti
tāra madhye sarva-śreṣṭha nāma-saṅkīrtana
niraparādhe nāma laile pāya prema-dhana***

Meaning—Among all the limbs of *bhakti*, *nava-vidhābhakti* (*śravaṇa*, *kīrtana*, *smaraṇa*, *pāda-sevana*, *vandana*, *arcana*, *dāśya*, *sakhya*, and *ātma-nivedana*) is the best, and it is capable of bestowing Kṛṣṇa and *kṛṣṇa-prema*. Among these nine types of devotional service, *nāma-kīrtana* is the best. If one chants the holy names without offense, one quickly attains the wealth of *kṛṣṇa-prema*.

Question 66—Is association with saintly persons necessary?

Answer—Of course one must take association of saintly persons. However, saintly association (*sādhu-*

saṅga) only takes place according to one's qualification, and it is not received just by being in physical proximity to a *sādhū*. One can have *sādhū-saṅga* even if one is physically separate from a *sādhū*, and one may not get *sādhū-saṅga* despite living in the same house as a *sādhū*.

Festivals are celebrated in *maṭhas* (monasteries) to provide opportunities for people to associate with saintly persons, to become *kṛṣṇa-vrata* (dedicated to Kṛṣṇa) instead of *grha-vrata* (dedicated only to one's family), to develop taste for the holy name, and to serve the spiritual master and devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa. [Note: those who have taken a vow to take care of their home, wife, and children are called *grha-vrata*.] The main purpose of festivals in *maṭhas*, recitations of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (*bhāgavata-pāṭha*), and discussions of pastimes of Lord Hari is to awaken the propensity of living entities to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa. In saintly association, one's propensity to serve Bhagavān awakens and one attains the topmost auspiciousness. A *sādhū* is a devotee, not a sense-enjoyer (*bhogī*) or renunciate (*tyāgī*). When we associate with saintly devotees (*bhakta-sādhus*), we realize that both the path of sense gratification (*bhoga-patha*) and the path of renunciation (*tyāga-patha*) are inauspicious. Pseudo or false renunciates see no way to achieve auspiciousness, and thus they remain on the path of renunciation. Both attraction and aversion to the material world arise from reluctance to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-vimukhatā*). As long as one has a tendency for either sense gratification or renunciation, it means that one has not taken complete shelter of devotional service. In other words, as long as one does not take to pure devotion or *śuddha-bhakti*, one will have an inclination for renunciation or sense gratification.

Question 67—How can we obtain the grace of Guru Nityānanda?

Answer—'I am very worthy and qualified'—this is not the mood of the spiritual path (*paramārtha-mārga*).

Rather, the mood is—‘There is no one on Earth as poor and inferior as me.’ Only when one has developed such a mood will one receive the mercy of Śrī Guru Nityānanda.

If we merely pretend to have a close relationship with Gurudeva, we will definitely face many obstacles, and as long as we remain far away from Gurudeva, there is no chance for our well-being. But if there is affinity, faith and love towards Gurudeva and Vaiṣṇavas, whether you stay away or stay near, welfare will definitely happen.

One day the son of a rich man came to me. He was practicing very intense renunciation. He was wearing a dirty cloth down to his knees. At that time, I was working as a landlord in Śrī Māyāpura. Seeing me engaged in the activities of a materialistic person, he lost faith in me. He left and took bad association elsewhere, after which he fell down in a few days. One will be totally ruined if one attempts to identify a *sādhū* by external activities, rather than by his honest intentions.

Question 68—How can one truly serve Lord Kṛṣṇa?

Answer—One truly serves Kṛṣṇa by serving a spiritual master who is a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-bhakta guru*) and by serving Vaiṣṇavas. However, neophyte devotees (*sahajiyā*) cannot understand this. They think that one who worships Kṛṣṇa is the greatest devotee. Regarding themselves to be Vaiṣṇavas, they accept service from others. They give up service to the spiritual master and Vaiṣṇavas. Those who heed the words of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His devotees know that one truly serves Kṛṣṇa by serving the spiritual master and Vaiṣṇavas. There is no value to serving Bhagavān if there is no service to devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Those who give up serving the spiritual master and Vaiṣṇavas, and pretend to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa or do *nāma-bhajana*, are in fact committing offense at every step. As long as offenses (*aparādhās*) are committed, one cannot actually serve Lord Kṛṣṇa and His holy name. Those who serve Guru and

Vaiṣṇavas automatically serve Lord Kṛṣṇa and His holy name. Caitanyadeva and the Gosvāmīs show mercy to devotees who serve the spiritual master and Vaiṣṇavas with respect and love. Previously, I had the conception that I was a great scholar of mathematics. At that time, by great fortune I had *darśana* of my Śrī Gurudeva. When he showed no regard for my qualities of truthfulness (*satyavādītā*), purity and morality (*nirmala-naitika-jīvana*), and scholarship (*pāṇḍitya*), I understood how great his qualification must be if he could reject a person like me.

When he startled me in this way, I realized that no one in this world is as insignificant and reprehensible as me. I used to give so much importance to scholarship (*pāṇḍitya*) and morality (*naitika-caritra*), but this great personality did not give them even an iota of importance. I understood that he had something invaluable. I thought, “Is this person very merciful, or is he full of false ego?” Then I surrendered to Bhagavān, and with His mercy I knew that there is no means for one's well-being other than the mercy of such great personalities who are totally detached from wealth, women, and prestige (*niṣkiñcana*). When this proper intelligence arose in me, I also surrendered to my Śrī Gurudeva, and my life became successful. After this ‘jolt’ from Śrī Gurudeva, I understood that unless materialistic persons are ‘jolted’ like this, they cannot improve their lives. That is why I am telling everyone that of all people on Earth, I am the biggest fool. Do not be a fool like me; abandon your pride of mundane scholarship and engage in the service of Bhagavān. Then your life will become successful. I am telling you the instruction of Lord Kṛṣṇa which I consider the most auspicious.

Question 69—If a householder devotee or devotee residing in a *maṭha* (monastery) have wealth but do not use it to serve Bhagavān, will this lead to offense?

Answer—*Jagad-guru* Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī prabhu says in *Śrī Bhakti-sandarbha*:

**ye tu sampattimanto gr̥hasthās teṣāṁ
tv arcana-mārga eva mukhyaḥ**

In other words, Deity worship (*arcana-mārga*) is the main duty for rich householders; they should serve Bhagavān nicely. *Bhāgavata* (10.84.37) states:

**ayaṁ svasty-ayanaḥ panthā dvi-jāter gr̥ha-medhinaḥ
yac chraddhayāpta-vittena śuklenejyeta pūruṣaḥ**

Householder devotees (*gr̥hastha-bhaktas*) should serve Śrī Hari and worship Him with faith and love. This alone will bring auspiciousness to them. If a householder devotee follows the limbs of devotional service including hearing (*śravaṇa*), chanting (*kīrtana*), and remembering (*smaraṇa*) like the *niṣkiñcana-bhaktas* (devotees devoid of material possessions), but fails to engage his wealth in Bhagavān's service, this is the defect of *vitta-śāṭhya*, or cheating in money matters. Thus, both householder devotees and devotees residing in a *maṭha*, besides engaging in hearing, chanting, and remembering, should completely give up miserliness (*kr̥panatā*) and wickedness (*śaṭhatā*). They should use their wealth to serve Hari, Guru, and Vaiṣṇavas as per their capacity. If Bhagavān Śrī Hari sees *kr̥panatā* and *śaṭhatā* in a devotee, He is unhappy and consequently that devotee cannot attain perfection (*siddhi*) in devotional service. Bhagavān Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva explained the duties of householder devotees to the residents of Kulīna village:

**prabhu kahe—kṛṣṇa-sevā vaiṣṇava sevana
nirantara kara kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana**

Meaning—The Lord said, “You devotees should continually perform *nāma-saṅkīrtana* and serve Kṛṣṇa and Vaiṣṇavas.”

Question 70—How will the living entities achieve auspiciousness (*maṅgala*)?

Answer—In the absence of knowledge of the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*bhagavat-jñāna*), free will (*svatantratā*) may lead the living entity into difficulty. *Bahiraṅgā-māyā*, the external illusory potency, puts living

entities who are averse to Kṛṣṇa into the position of being enjoyers of sense objects (*viṣaya-vigrahas*) and bewilders them with the false ego of being an enjoyer (*bhoktā-abhimāna*). They forget their constitutional nature (*svarūpa*) of being a servant of Bhagavān and experience a life full of danger. They must feel distress due to many types of moods within the false ego (*jaḍīya-abhimānas*). While wandering in the material world, a fortunate living entity (*bhāgyavān-jīva*) may develop an interest in serving Bhagavān, by His grace. That fortunate living entity develops faith in the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva, who is non-different from Bhagavān, and who is the ultimate shelter of love of Godhead (*āśraya-jātīya-bhagavān*), and he enters the kingdom of devotional service (*bhajana-rājya*) by serving the spiritual master. Under the shelter of *sad-guru* and by the influence of *sādhū-saṅga*, the fortunate living entity realizes that the lotus feet of gurudeva are a treasure of auspiciousness, and he sees *gurudeva* as the receptacle of love of Godhead (*āśraya-jātīya-bhagavān*). In this way his propensity to serve (*sevā-pravṛtti*) becomes stronger. Only living entities who have the good fortune of taking shelter at the lotus feet of a spiritual master, the most beloved of Bhagavān, can attain pure devotion (*śuddha-bhakti*) and thus be saved from the clutches of the illusory potency. If one commits offense to the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva, one's attachment (*āśakti*) to worldly objects will increase, and consequently he will fall away from the path of devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa. He will proceed on the path of sense enjoyment or on the path of renunciation, both of which appear sweet or satisfying at first. In other words, he endeavors to achieve the happiness of Heaven (*svarga-sukha*) or the happiness of liberation (*mukti-sukha*). Only fortunate saintly persons continually serve Bhagavān under the guidance of a spiritual master. Such saintly persons have no taste for what is pleasing to their own senses (*preya-vicāra*); indeed, they find the thought of enjoying sense objects (*bhogapara-vicāra*) to be distasteful.

Question 71—How should devotees live at home or in a monastery (*maṭha*)?

Answer—Whether a devotee resides in a *maṭha* (*maṭha-vāsī-bhakta*) or at home (*grhastha-bhakta*), he should externally seem like an ordinary sense-gratifier (*viṣayī-prāyaḥ*), but internally or in the heart he should have deep dedication to devotional service. Outwardly dressed as a devotee, he should not be attached to sense objects, household, or wealth, and should not be desirous of prestige (*pratiṣṭhā-kāmī*). He should not engage in sense enjoyment; to do so is duplicity (*kapaṭatā*), which is a formidable obstacle (*bhayaṅkara-bādhā*) to devotional service. False or monkey renunciation (*markaṭa-vairāgya*) is reprehensible, and it causes a living entity to fall down from the path of devotional service. We should accept the ideals and teachings of Mahāprabhu, who told Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī:

***markaṭa-vairāgya nā kara loka dekhāñā
yathā-yogyā viṣaya bhuñja' anāsakta hañā
antare niṣṭhā kara, bāhye loka-vyavahāra
acirāt kṛṣṇa tomāya karibe uddhāra***

Meaning: Raghunātha! Do not practice renunciation like monkeys as a show to others. Accept sense objects with a detached heart to the degree that you need them. Always have dedication for devotional service in your heart, but externally behave like an ordinary person. In this way, very soon Kṛṣṇa will deliver you.

Question 72—Does accepting the renounced order of life (*sannyāsa-āśrama*) automatically lead to liberation from the material world?

Answer—No! Entering the renounced order of life and putting on the dress of a renunciate (*sannyāsī*) are not the same thing. The real meaning of *sannyāsa* is giving up the desire for *bhukti* (sense gratification) and *mukti* (liberation). Those who give up the desire for mundane religiosity (*dharma*), economic development (*artha*), sense gratification (*kāma*), and liberation (*mokṣa*), and make

serving Lord Kṛṣṇa the essence of their lives, are actually renunciates. A true monk (*yathārtha-sannyāsī*) follows in the footsteps of great personalities (*mahājanas*), and he is exclusively devoted to Bhagavān; merely wearing the attire (*veśa*) of a monk without having these exalted qualities is nothing but imitation or hypocrisy.

Mahāprabhu said:

***parātma-niṣṭhā mātra veśa dhāraṇa
mukanda-sevāya haya saṁsāra tāraṇa***

In other words, the purpose (*uddeśya*) of wearing the dress of a renunciate (*veśa-dhāraṇa*) and accepting the renounced order of life (*sannyāsa-grahaṇa*) is to develop dedication (*niṣṭhā*) for Bhagavān. One is delivered from material existence by serving Bhagavān. Accepting the renounced order of life means lovingly serving Lord Kṛṣṇa with one's body (*tana*), mind (*mana*), speech (*vacana*), wealth (*artha*), knowledge (*vidyā*), intelligence (*buddhi*), and possessions (*viśayas*). Only in this way can one be liberated from material existence and become a devotee. One cannot deliver oneself without serving Bhagavān. Whether a householder or monk, one will have to dedicate his life to the service of the Lord. Only then will Bhagavān be happy and bestow auspiciousness. If we serve Him and give up miserliness and deceitfulness, we will get His mercy in this very lifetime.

Question 73—Can a devotee be recognized by his external activities, knowledge, wealth, or poverty?

Answer—Never. Sense gratifiers (*bhogī-vyakti*) relish mundane happiness (*jaḍa-vilāsa*) and they are addicted to sense enjoyment (*viśaya*). Renounced persons (*tyāgī-vyakti*) regard worldly sense objects (*sāṁsārika-viśayas*) to be a source of unhappiness (*duḥkha-janaka*), and thus they become detached from them. Both sense gratifiers and renounced persons are nondevotees who are full of fruitive desires. They cannot understand the service attitude (*sevā-bhāva*) of devotees, nor their natural renunciation. Devotees may externally perform pastimes in

which they have worldly opulences such as prestigious birth (*janma*), wealth (*aiśvarya*), scholarship (*vidyā*), or beauty (*saundarya*). Alternatively, they may perform pastimes in which they are devoid of these opulences. One will be cheated if one attempts to judge or identify them according to how much opulence they possess. The scriptures state that it is very difficult for even demigods to understand the activities of Vaiṣṇavas. Fruitive workers, speculative philosophers, sense gratifiers, and renunciates may see devotees in various ways through their gross vision, but they cannot understand the real nature of devotees. There is no shortage of opulence in devotees of Bhagavān, Who is replete with six opulences. However, devotees dedicate all of their opulence to the service of Bhagavān; they do not enjoy or renounce sense objects like sense gratifiers or renunciates do. Whether or not devotees of Bhagavān have opulence, one should have faith in them and not disrespect them in any way. Only devotees know how to properly utilize sense objects and the various opulences of this world.

Devotees are neither sense enjoyers nor renunciates; they always endeavor to satisfy the senses of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Such beautiful spiritual intelligence is only attained by the mercy of devotees. One who has developed this intelligence: always performs *hari-kīrtana* (loud glorification of Lord Hari) and *hari-sevā* (service to Lord Hari); has given up all types of false ego; is completely dedicated to the lotus feet of devotees of Bhagavān; has stopped trying to understand Bhagavān and His devotees by his own intelligence; and has abandoned all desires other than that to serve Bhagavān. In this way, eternal auspiciousness is attained.

Question 74—Will one obtain everything by taking shelter of the lotus feet of the divine spiritual master (*sad-guru*)?

Answer—By taking shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva, one obtains everything: *kṛṣṇa-nāma* (holy name

of Lord Kṛṣṇa) and *kṛṣṇa-mantra* (holy *mantra* of Kṛṣṇa). However, if one does not have the intelligence to serve Śrī Gurudeva sincerely, one will not realize the transcendental truths of Bhagavān and *bhakti*. If one does not serve the spiritual master faithfully, intimately, and lovingly (*viśrambha-pūrvaka*), and does not advance on the path of devotional service as per his instructions, one cannot achieve real auspiciousness. In other words, one cannot achieve *bhakti*. People who think that sense perception is the only means of obtaining knowledge (*ādhyakṣika-jana*) have full faith in reasoning and argumentation (*tarka-patha*). If one adheres strictly to *tarka-patha*, one cannot enter *śrauta-patha*, the path of submissive aural reception from authorities, or *bhakti-mārga*, the path of devotional service. Logic is a product of intelligence, and devotional service is beyond intelligence. One's intelligence is not fully developed unless one practices devotional service under the shelter of the lotus feet of a devotee spiritual master.

Scriptures state:

***ādau guru-padāśraya tasmād kṛṣṇa dīkṣādi śikṣaṇam
viśrambheṇa guroḥ sevā sādhu vartmānu-vartanam***

Meaning: First, a spiritual aspirant (*sādhaka*) must take shelter at the lotus feet of a spiritual master (*guru-padāśraya*). Then he must accept initiation into a *mantra* of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-dīkṣā*) and accept spiritual instructions (*śikṣā*). Thereafter, he must lovingly serve the spiritual master and follow the path shown by great saintly personalities.

Question 75—Who is *niṣkiñcana*?

Answer—Those who do not desire anything of this world are *niṣkiñcana*. They know that nothing in the material world can provide lasting happiness; no object on Earth is ever-pleasing in nature. Earth is like a prison for the conditioned living entities; we are imprisoned here due to forgetting God, and that is why we are suffering so much.

Prahlāda Mahārāja was the emperor of Bhārata-

varṣa (*bhārata-samrāṭa*), and he was a devotee devoid of hankering for wealth (*niṣkiñcana-bhakta*). Sudāmā-vipra, who was very poor, was also *niṣkiñcana*. Both of them were devotees without any material motive (*niṣkāma-bhaktas*). *Niṣkiñcana-bhaktas* know that this entire world is an instrument (*upakaraṇa*) for serving Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas. That is why they do not desire to either enjoy the objects of this world or renounce them. Rather, they engage all objects in the service of Bhagavān. If one does not perform devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, he has no right to accept even a piece of straw from this world; devotees are always aware of this.

Devotees know that as a result of rendering pure devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, all facilities are provided and all auspiciousness is attained. By continually serving the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-nāma*) without committing any offenses, one can realize the nature (*svarūpa*) of *bhakta*, *bhakti*, and Bhagavān. One should perform *kīrtana* of *kṛṣṇa-kathā* only after having the good fortune of hearing it from the lotus mouth of *sādhus* and *guru*; this is the only way to exclusively serve Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-anuśīlana*). If we are not exclusive in our service to Him, we will have to serve worldly persons and objects. [If one does not cultivate such exclusive devotion for Lord Kṛṣṇa, one will only be devoted to worldly things and not to Him.]

Question 76—What is favorable for *kṛṣṇa-anuśīlana*?

Answer—We should do *anuśīlana* of Kṛṣṇa only. In other words, all of our activities should be for the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Vārṣabhānavī-devī Śrīmatī Rādhikājī is most favorable (*anukūlā*) to Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, Her name is Anukūlā. *Guru-pāda-padma* is a personal associate of Śrīmatī Rādhikājī. Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava-vṛnda worship Anukūlā's Kṛṣṇa or Rādhājī's Kṛṣṇa. They are more inclined (*pakṣapātī*) to serve Śrī Vārṣabhānavī, the daughter of Śrī Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja, than to serve Kṛṣṇa.

One can cultivate favorable devotional service to Kṛṣṇa only under the guidance (*ānugātya*) of Anukūlā (Śrīmatī Rādhikājī). All facilities are attained only when one's devotional service is directed to Kṛṣṇa. In other words, if one tries to please Bhagavān in all ways, all obstacles to devotional service will gradually disappear. Alas—instead of regarding Kṛṣṇa to be the proprietor of our home, we regard ourselves as the owner, and thus we are *grha-vratī*. [Note:*grha-vratī* means a householder who is attached to family life including home, family, wife, children, and so on.]

Question 77—Should we speak the harsh truth?

Answer—Certainly. We should fearlessly disclose the truth to everyone, and thus they will not be cheated. The truth, even if unpleasant, should be spoken if it brings about the welfare of the living entities. No one should be bothered by this. We should try to search for the real truth. We should ponder how to bring about the welfare of all people of the world. We should be determined to bestow auspiciousness on ourselves and others. We should strive not only for the welfare of people in the present age, but for the eternal well-being of humanity in all ages. We should always discuss the blissful abode of Vaikuṇṭha. After reaching that abode, one does not have to return to this miserable material world. Before we can tell others about that transcendental world, we must first take shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva.

We should always serve the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva, who gives us transcendental knowledge. If we live in a household, everyone living there should serve him. We should make sure that Bhagavān and devotees are in a comfortable home, even if we ourselves are living in a hut. We should feed Bhagavān even if we ourselves are not able to eat. Only in this way can we get His mercy. We must always remember that everything belongs to Bhagavān. Life only has meaning when all objects of the world are used to serve Bhagavān. One must follow these principles in order to preach them. If the truths of scripture

are not spoken boldly, Śrī Guru and Gaurāṅga will not be pleased. One can preach fearlessly to the degree that one is empowered and firm in devotional service. If I refrain from telling the absolute (*nirapekṣa*) truth out of fear that people will be offended, I have abandoned the path of truth as taught by the Vedic scriptures (*śrauta-patha*) and accepted the path of falsehood that is not supported by the Vedic scriptures (*a-śrauta-patha*). If I do so, I have become an atheist and cheater.

Question 78—Who is a *gr̥ha-vrata* (a householder who has taken a vow to remain in family life or someone determined to indulge their senses by fulfilling personal desires)?

Answer—Those who have the false ego of being a man or woman are *gr̥ha-vratīs*. Such people are greedy for gold (*kanaka*), wealth (*artha*), women (*kāminī*, *strī*) and prestige (*pratiṣṭhā*). They think that they should have servants. As owners of the household, their goal is to nicely satisfy their senses.

If we have the mood of an owner or proprietor, we are a *gr̥ha-vrata* and a *dehātma-vādī* (one who regards the body to be the soul). In this way, we see the whole world as an object of our enjoyment (*bhoga*); that is why we face so much adversity. As long as we do not develop the good intelligence to realize that the world is for Bhagavān's service, our conception of being the enjoyer and proprietor of the household (*gr̥ha-vrata-buddhi*) will not go away, and we will not be able to inquire about or find our true welfare. Those who strive for enjoyment or renunciation end up in total ruination; they cannot understand Bhagavān. If we rely on this temporary world, the end result is sadness and death. By engaging in materialistic activities devoid of Kṛṣṇa consciousness (*kṛṣṇa-bahirmukha saṁsāra*), we face death, many types of diseases, and burning in the fire of the three-fold miseries. Worldly concerns and emotions lead only to death; day by day they lead one to hell and extreme sorrow. However, a person attached to household

life cannot realize this.

Question 79—Whom should we hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from?

Answer—We should hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from the lotus mouth of a *mahā-bhāgavata* Śrī Gurudeva and from pure devotees dedicated to their spiritual master (*guru-niṣṭha śuddha-bhaktas*). One will not attain auspiciousness if one hears *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from a non-devotee (one who has not yet become a *bhāgavata* or devotee himself). One of bad character, whose mind is full of waves of lust (*kāma*), and who is only interested in prestige and wealth, cannot purely recite or glorify *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Such a person wants to satisfy his own senses on the pretext of reciting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. In this way, he cheats both himself and others. We should take shelter of Śrī Gurudeva, who always performs devotional service to Hari, and listen to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from his lotus mouth, or from the lotus mouth of other pure devotees according to his instructions. This is the only way to attain auspiciousness and *bhakti*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam can only be truly recited by one for whom it is his very life (*jīvana*) and object of worship and service (*sevya-svarūpa*). We should associate with devotees who serve Tḥākuraḥjī (Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa) and chant *hari-nāma* (holy name of Lord Hari). We should surrender everything to them. They are not intoxicated by enjoyment of sense objects, and they do not cheat themselves and others under the guise of serving Bhagavān. They do not desire mundane prestige like a false renunciate (*phalgu-vairāgī*), and they do not falsely renounce things that are meant for serving Bhagavān.

Whomever I associate with and hear narrations of pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa from should be *śrauta-panthī*. *Sādhus* and *gurus* never accept the path of sense pleasure (*preya-patha*); they follow the path of eternal auspiciousness (*śreya-patha* or *śrauta-patha*). They teach others the path of truthfulness (*satya-patha*) and devotional

service (*bhakti-patha*), which they have learned from their spiritual master. They never tell others things concocted in their own minds. We often take shelter of a *guru* or *sādhū* not for spiritual benefit, but to obtain material objects or fulfill lusty desires (*apa-svārtha*). These days, for some people it has become a family tradition to accept a spiritual master, just as one would hire a barber or washer-man. For others, it is simply fashionable to have a spiritual master. For many, associating with saintly persons or listening to *hari-kathā* is merely another type of worldly activity (*kārya*). How can we really achieve auspiciousness—is there any way other than hearing narrations of Bhagavān's pastimes (*kathā*) from the lotus mouth of a bona fide spiritual master? Those seeking their well-being should be vigilant about *sādhū-saṅga*. If one hears about scriptures from those who are merely imitating saintly persons, one will certainly face misfortune (*vipatti*).

If one is fortunate enough to attain association with a pure saintly person by the grace of Bhagavān, and to develop dedication towards him, one will be able to understand topics about *satya-vastu* Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is eternal and absolute, and topics about *bhakti*. We should not spend even one moment (*muhūrta*) of whatever time remains in our life in activities meant for sense gratification; rather, we should always be engaged in devotional service to Bhagavān, and we should always be eager for *sat-saṅga*. While various activities take place in other species of life such as animals, the only true duty of the living entity—to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master—can only be fulfilled in a birth as a human.

Question 80—How can one see Bhagavān?

Answer—Bhagavān Śrī Hari is devoid of mundane qualities. In other words, He is beyond the three modes of material nature: passion (*raja*), goodness (*sata*) and ignorance (*tama*). He is beyond the jurisdiction of the illusory potency *māyā*. There is no means of seeing

Bhagavān, who is transcendental (*nirguṇa-vastu*), other than submissive aural reception through one's ears. Narrations of pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa that flow from the lotus mouth of saintly persons carry transcendental potency, and if that spiritual sound vibration (*vaikuṇṭha-śabda*) enters our ears, our Kṛṣṇa consciousness will certainly develop—in other words, we will become inclined to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa. That sound vibration has descended to this material world from the spiritual abode of Vaikuṇṭha, and it can take us to Vaikuṇṭha. In contrast, the sound vibrations of this material world and materialistic discussions take us towards hell (*naraka-loka*). Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came to this world to speak about the spiritual abode of Vaikuṇṭha. Unfortunately, the words of that most merciful Lord are not entering our ears. If by great fortune our propensity to serve Bhagavān awakens, we can hear and comprehend the pastimes of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Our consciousness will have to be raised from its present level. We will have to hear about the pastimes of Bhagavān directly from living saintly persons through their distinguished living eloquence. The very moment we stop hearing from pure saintly persons and stop sincerely serving them, the illusory potency *māyā* will devour us. Therefore, it is our duty to go to places where living *hari-kathā* is being spoken by saintly persons who are in deep spiritual consciousness and engage our mind in such places. When one who is inclined to render devotional service hears such *hari-kathā* from a living source, the function of the soul manifests. Then, we will realize Bhagavān in our pure heart and have His *darśana* (audience) there. Such *śrauta-patha* or aural reception is the only way of having vision of Bhagavān. There is no other way.

Question 81—What is the fruit of performing *kṛṣṇa-nāma kīrtana*?

Answer—The loud glorification of the holy names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is direct service (*anuśīlana*) to Lord Kṛṣṇa. If one

performs such *kīrtana*, unwanted tendencies, such as the desire to enjoy sense gratification and the desire for liberation, may be overcome. By the grace of *śrī-nāma*, all kinds of unwanted habits (*anarthas*) are destroyed because *kṛṣṇa-nāma* is directly Kṛṣṇa Himself. *Śakti-mān kṛṣṇa-nāma* (powerful holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa) possesses unlimited potency; nothing is impossible when one receives His grace. As a result of performing *nāma-kīrtana*, a chanter automatically attains freedom from unwanted desires (*anarthas*), and love of Godhead, which is the ultimate goal of human life (*paramārtha*). In other words, one attains love (*prema*) for the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa by chanting the holy name. *Kṛṣṇa-nāma* is the only shelter of the living entities. In this age of Kali, the iron age of quarrel and hypocrisy, there is no means of attaining spiritual perfection other than *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, chanting of the holy names of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Such devotional service of chanting the holy name (*śrī-nāma-bhajana*) is the only way to achieve auspiciousness (*kalyāṇa*) in life and to remove inauspiciousness.

Question 82—Are activities meant to satisfy Lord Kṛṣṇa included in devotional service (*bhakti*)?

Answer—Certainly. Devotees have no duty other than serving Lord Kṛṣṇa. Whatever activities pure devotees perform for the purpose of serving Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-kārya*) are included in *bhakti*. A living entity must personally experience the results of actions done under the influence of the false ego of being the doer (*karttā-abhimāna*). Thus, there is a great difference between fruitive activities (*karma*) and *bhakti*.

Question 83—What is *jīva-tattva*?

Answer—The meaning of the word *jīva* (living entity or soul) is connected to the word *jīvana* (life). Bhagavān has three types of potencies: *antaraṅgā* (internal), *bahiraṅgā* (external), and *taṭasthā* (marginal). The *jīva* manifests from a transformation of *taṭasthā-śakti*. He is a

real entity (*vastu*), not an imaginary object like a ‘flower in the sky.’ He is not subject to birth or creation; he is eternally present. The *jīva* is conscious by nature, although his consciousness is minute or atomic. In contrast, the Supreme Personality of Godhead has unlimited consciousness. In this way, the *jīva* is eternally different from the Supreme Lord. Śrīman Mahāprabhu stated that the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the Lord of the illusory potency (*māyā-adhīśa*), while the *jīva* may be under the control of *māyā*—this is the difference between the Supreme Lord, *īśvara*, and the *jīva*. *īśvara* is absolute (*brahma-vastu*) and unlimited (*bṛhad-vastu*). In contrast, the *jīva* is insignificant (*kṣudra-vastu*) and atomic (*aṇu-cit*). *īśvara* is the controller of the illusory potency (*māyā-adhīśa*), while the *jīva* may be controlled by the illusory potency (*māyā-vaśa*). The *jīva* is an eternal servant (*nitya-dāsa*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa by nature, and Lord Kṛṣṇa is his eternal master (*nitya-prabhu*). Kṛṣṇa is the object of service (*sevyā*), controller (*niyāmaka*), and protector (*rakṣaka*) of the *jīva*. Service to Lord Kṛṣṇa is the eternal duty of the *jīva*.

Śrīman Mahāprabhu said:

***jīvera svarūpa haya kaṣṇera nitya-dāsa
kṛṣṇera taṭasthā-śakti bhedābheda prakāśa
kṛṣṇa bhuli sei jīva anādi bahir-mukha
ataeva māyā tā're deya saṁsāra-duḥkha
sādhū-śāstra-kṛpāya yadī kṛṣṇonmukha haya
sei jīva nistare māyā tāhāre chāḍaya
tā te kṛṣṇa bhaje kare gurura sevana
māyā-jāla chūṭe pāya kṛṣṇera caraṇa***

Meaning: The living entity is by nature an eternal servant (*nitya-dāsa*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He is the marginal potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He is simultaneously a different and non-different manifestation (*bheda-abheda prakāśa*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Having forgotten Lord Kṛṣṇa, the living entity is averse to Him since time immemorial; thus, the illusory potency gives him distress in material existence. When the living entity becomes inclined to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa by the

mercy of saintly persons and scriptures, he is delivered—the illusory potency releases him from her clutches. In other words, when the living entity engages in devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master, he becomes free from the net of the illusory potency and attains the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

The *jīva* is the soul (*ātmā*), not the mind (*mana*) or body (*deha*); he resides in the body. When the *jīva* leaves a particular body, that body falls dead on the ground. The *jīva* is consciousness (*cetana*), while the mind is a semblance of consciousness (*cetana-ābhāsa*) and the body is insentient (*acetana*) or dull matter (*jaḍa*). The mind is the subtle body (*sūkṣma-śarīra*). The mind is the dim reflection of animation and it is meddling with the world; the mind is not one with the soul. [The mind is a dim reflection of consciousness; it is not the same as the soul.] The mind always wanders in the external world where it perceives gross objects. However, it cannot provide a connection with the eternal substance (*nitya-vastu*), the Supreme Lord. I am a *jīva*, not the mind or body. The body and myself are not the same, just as a home (*grha*) is not the same as the resident of that home (*grhī*). The soul or *jīva*, who resides inside the body, is the proprietor of the subtle body or mind, and the gross body. Mind is the property and the living entity (soul) is the proprietor. Gross body is the property and the living entity (soul) is the proprietor. Due to ignorance (*ajñānatā*), the *jīva* identifies (*ātma-buddhi*) with the body, and he mistakes the body as 'I'.

Śrīman Mahāprabhu stated:

***jīve svarūpa kṛṣṇa-dāsa-abhimāna
dehe ātma-jñāne ācchādita sei jñāna
dehe ātma-buddhi haya vivartera sthāna
dehe ātmabuddhi—ei mithyā haya***

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*)

The *jīva* is an eternal substance (*nitya-vastu*); he is not temporary (*anitya*) like the gross and subtle bodies. Although he is by nature a servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevaka jīva*), he has forgotten Lord Kṛṣṇa, and therefore he

is in so much distress and he has fallen so low. Eagerness to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-unmukhatā*) is the sign of a *jīva*'s good health (*svāsthya*); his healthy condition (*svastha-avasthā*) is to know himself as *kṛṣṇa-dāsa*. Currently, the *jīva* has forgotten his true ego as a servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and he has become a sense enjoyer or dry renunciate. Thus, he is in a diseased condition. Appropriate medical treatment (*cikitsā*) is to turn his face towards Kṛṣṇa. True compassion is to turn a *jīva* who is averse to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-bahirmukha*) into a devotee who inclined to serve Him (*kṛṣṇa-unmukha*); this is the best act of kindness. The living entity (*jīva*), who belongs to Lord Kṛṣṇa, is suffering due to forgetting Him. Only by being completely dovetailed with Lord Kṛṣṇa, and by being influenced by the company of saints, will one be able to eliminate all kinds of inconvenience, and be happy forever. [Once one is fully connected with Kṛṣṇa as a result of *sādhū-saṅga*, one's distress will go away and one will be happy forever.]

Question 84—I am greatly benefited by hearing your instructions. Please speak more *hari-kathā*.

Answer—The service that Śrī Gaurasundara talks about is the best. *Gaura-vihita-kīrtana*, the *kīrtana* ordained and performed by Śrī Gaura, contains the medicine that can remove our current disease and awaken a service attitude in our heart. It is everyone's duty to take this medicine; only then will we find peace. *Kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana* is the infallible medicine, and *hari-kīrtana* is always essential. The loud glorification of Lord Hari as instructed by Śrī Caitanya is the only *patha* (path) and *pātheya* (provisions for the journey) for obtaining eternal peace. [**Note:** *Hari-kīrtana* is the path or way itself and the food to be eaten during the journey on that path.] Lord Hari's entire potency is invested in *hari-kīrtana*, and the ultimate goal of human life is to regularly engage in *hari-kīrtana*. [All power is within *hari-kīrtana*, which can bestow *kṛṣṇa-prema*, the crest-jewel of all goals of human life. This

supreme goal is unattainable through other processes such as *jñāna* (mental speculation or knowledge leading to impersonal liberation), *karma* (desire for the fruits of one's activities), and *yoga* (mysticism).] It is the duty of those who have taken shelter of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to follow His path and follow the instructions of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Having forgotten service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, we have become lords here. We had a desire to be a master (*prabhu*), and this material world has given us an opportunity to be so; this world is well-equipped for this purpose. However, to be a lord in the material world is not the *dharma* (constitutional function) or *svarūpa* (function of eternal nature) of the living entity; rather, it is a function of perverted nature (*virūpa*). There is no peace in this; there is peace only in performing devotional service. The true ego of being a servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa is the only way to be peaceful. Sense gratification and renunciation are not functions of the soul; service to Bhagavān (*bhagavat-sevā*) is. Forgetting our real identity—who I am—has caused our ruination. “I am a servant of Bhagavān”—this is divine knowledge. Śrī Gurudeva, beloved of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-preṣṭha*), reminds us of our eternal nature as a servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa by bestowing transcendental knowledge (*divya-jñāna*) or spiritual initiation (*dīkṣā*). [Note: the words *dīkṣā* and *divya-jñāna* are synonymous.] As a result of serving the spiritual master, *ātma-dharma bhagavad-bhakti* (constitutional function of the soul) manifests. If I give up duplicity, approach devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and follow their instructions, I will certainly be delivered in this life or the next. Our life becomes meaningful only when we are granted service to Lord Kṛṣṇa. You are all scholars (*paṇḍitas*). I do not regard you as non-devotees; you are saintly persons. I bow my head at your feet; please mercifully give this service to me. Please do not think that you are a great personality of the external world. Give up everything else and develop attraction for the lotus feet of Śrī Caitanya-candra; only this much is required. Only if this

happens will you be able to understand immediately that there is no imperfection in the words of Caitanyadeva. Those who hear about this fact will engage in *kīrtana*. My brothers, why are you walking on the path of inauspiciousness? What is the purpose of anything else? Our only duty is to always listen to *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. It is especially important to serve Kṛṣṇa in every way.

Presently our soul is sleeping and giving all responsibility to the mind. We should awaken at least a little because the mind is currently disloyal, and it is our greatest enemy. It is throwing us into an ocean of sorrow. Therefore, it is necessary to keep the mind under control. No matter what the situation is, forgetting Bhagavān is the cause of all misfortunes. [Forgetting God is the reason for all of our troubles.] All facilities come to one only after taking shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. If one gives up Hari, one enters darkness which is troubling to the soul. We have received the human form of life by great fortune; we have not gotten it to waste it in foolish activities. The normal condition of human life (proper human life) is rendering service to Bhagavān.

***'kṛṣṇa, tomāra haṇa' yadi bale eka-bāra
māyā-bandha haite kṛṣṇa tāre kare pāra***

“O Kṛṣṇa! I am Yours”—if one says this even once, Kṛṣṇa frees him from the bondage of the illusory potency (*māyā-bandhana*).

Question 85—How do we become a servitor of Lord Kṛṣṇa?

Answer—First we must surrender to Bhagavān and take shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī Guru. We cannot see Bhagavān with these material eyes. We are conditioned living entities. Only by following in the footsteps of the servants of Śrī Caitanya-deva will our true ego of being a servant of Bhagavān (*bhagavad-dāsa-abhimāna*) awaken. [Only by carrying the shoes of the servants of Śrī Caitanya-deva on our heads will our true ego of being a servant of Bhagavān (*bhagavad-dāsa-abhimāna*) awaken.] By the

mercy of devotees, our devotional eyes will open, and only then will we become a servitor of Lord Kṛṣṇa and have His *darśana* by the mercy of the spiritual master (*guru-kṛpā*).

Question 86—Who taught us the philosophical conclusion (*su-siddhānta*) that *bhakti* alone is very pleasing (*preyaḥ*)?

Answer—Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, preceptor of the whole world (*jagad-guru*), is one of the great personalities sent by Lord Śrī Gaurasundara to deliver the world. He is our shelter; he gave us a chance to know about pure devotional service, the current of devotion flowing through an unbroken chain of spiritual masters (*guru-paramparā*). While past *ācāryas* taught that *bhakti* is auspicious and beneficial, Śrī Bhakti-vinoda Ṭhākura, best of the followers of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, taught that *bhakti* alone is all-pleasing (*preyaḥ*). Those who do not regard devotional service as such are non-devotees; they are averse to Lord Hari and devoid of auspiciousness. Conditioned human beings find only activities other than those of devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, such as those of *karma* and *jñāna*, to be pleasing, and they remain absorbed in trying to satisfy their senses. Śrī Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura is a beloved personal associate of Śrī Gaurasundara and a non-different manifestation of Him. He regards devotional service to Bhagavān to be very pleasing, and he is happily satisfying the senses of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura found only causeless devotional service (*ahaitukī-bhakti*) to be very pleasing, and he advises those who choose the auspicious path of devotional service. One path is pleasing to some, and another path is pleasing to others. Śrīla Bhakti-vinoda Ṭhākura protected living entities from making endeavors that do not give happiness to Kṛṣṇa (*a-bhakti-vinoda*). He did not preach about topics that are partially related or unrelated to devotional service. Some people say, “Devotional service may give you happiness, but non-

devotional activities give me happiness.” However, Bhakti-vinoda Ṭhākura refuted the idea that material activities and spiritual activities are the same or are of equal value (*cit-jaḍa samanvaya-vādīs*). *Bhakti* (devotional service) and *abhakti* (non-devotional activities) can never be equal. The divine pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and the material pastimes of the illusory potency *māyā* are of very different natures. Bhakti-vinoda is only interested in teaching and facilitating devotional service.

The flow of pure devotional service was obstructed by many worldly circumstances, and Śrī Bhakti-vinoda Ṭhākura, who regards devotional service to be pleasing, allowed that flow to continue. Those who respect the pastimes and teachings of Bhakti-vinoda Prabhu, and who honor his instructions and precepts, are my spiritual masters. We have taken shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva, who regards only *bhakti* to be pleasing. We have nothing to do with those who regard Bhakti-vinoda Ṭhākura, beloved of Gaurasundara, to be a worldly person. May we never have to see the face of an unfortunate person who is opposed to Bhakti-vinoda Ṭhākura.

Question 87—Should we keep always the fire of *saṅkīrtana* burning in the *maṭha*?

Answer—Certainly. The fire of the congregational chanting of the holy names of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*saṅkīrtana-agni*) must be kept burning in every *maṭha*. We must give special attention to preventing this fire from being extinguished. There should be no trace in the *maṭha* of activities for satisfying our own senses. Priority must be given to activities for fully satisfying the senses of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda. When the fire of congregational chanting of the holy names of Lord Kṛṣṇa, which cleanses the mirror of the heart, is not burning properly in the *maṭha*, unwanted qualities such as feeling enmity (*mano-mālinya*), fault-finding (*chidra-anveṣaṇa*), duplicity (*kapaṭatā*), envy (*īrṣyā*), and hating (*vidveṣa*) will contaminate the hearts of the residents. As a result, the forest fire of material

existence (*bhava-mahā-dāvāgni*) will gradually increase, and as long as it is not eliminated at the root, one cannot attain *prema*, the ultimate result of *saṅkīrtana*.

The effulgent flames of *saṅkīrtana* burn everything undesirable including *anya-abhilāṣa*, *karma*, *jñāna*, *bhoga*, *vrata*, and *tapa*. Only wretched people having perverted intelligence (*durbuddhi*) adopt other means (*sādhana*) and goals (*sādhya*); intelligent people worship Mahāprabhu through *saṅkīrtana-yajña*. By simply performing *śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana*, one automatically accomplishes what was accomplished by the *mahā-dhyāna* of Satya-yuga, the *mahā-yajña* of Tretā-yuga, and the *mahā-arcana* of Dvāpara-yuga. It is impossible to serve Śrī-Gaura-sundara, the combined form of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda (*śrī-rādhā-govinda-milita-tanu*), without *saṅkīrtana*. *Arcana* alone is not sufficient; the *mahā-arcana* of *saṅkīrtana* is required. Śrīman Mahāprabhuji says at the beginning of *Śikṣāṣṭaka*: *paraṁ vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*, which means, "Let there be victory for *śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana*."

Question 88—How should we live as householders?

Answer—One can avoid falling into the deep, dark well of family life if one gets the association of swan-like, great liberated personalities (*parama-harṣa mahā-puruṣas*). By such association, one can be a spiritual householder who aspires for love of Kṛṣṇa (*pāramārthika-grhastha*). Pure devotees (*bhakta-bhāgavata*) and the scripture *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are non-different. Householders who do not associate with such devotees, and do not discuss *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, cannot attain auspiciousness.

It is good to be in household life as long as one is nicely serving Bhagavān. One cannot serve Him if one is excessively attached to materialistic family life, including home, family, wife, and children (*grha-vratadharmā*). Family life is auspicious if one is determined to serve Kṛṣṇa; this is much better than having false renunciation

(*phalgu-vairāgya*) or monkey renunciation (*markaṭa-vairāgya*), which does not bring even an iota of auspiciousness. The *grhastha-āśrama* is acceptable only if it is favorable for devotional service to Lord Hari; if family life does not include devotional service, it should be abandoned. If one exhibits detachment from home as a show of false asceticism or renunciation, this is not beneficial; such an immature *vairāgī* will fall down after just two or three days.

Gr̥ha-vrata-dharma (excessive attachment to household life) is destroyed through association with devotees of Bhagavān. Such excessive attachment arises only in those who follow the ways of the material world (*bāhya-jagata*).

Devotees of Bhagavān may be in either the *sannyāsa-āśrama* or *grhastha-āśrama*. It is not good for non-devotees to enter household life. For devotees, household life is like living in a *maṭha*, because in both cases the goal is *kṛṣṇa-prema*. There is a difference of Heaven and Earth between a person attached to sense gratification (*gr̥ha-vrata*) and a person attached to devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-vrata*). [For devotees of Bhagavān, just as taking up the path of renunciation may be necessary, taking up the path of a household may also be necessary. It may be desirable for devotees of Bhagavān to enter into a household, but non-devotees should not do so. If a devotee of Bhagavān enters into a household, it should be understood that this is like entering an *āśrama* of a *maṭha* (monastery). This is because there is no difference between a spiritual household and a monastery. There is a difference between a household of materialistic non-devotees (*gr̥ha-vrata*) and a household of devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa.]

In household life, one should cultivate devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-anuśīlana*). A householder devotee aspiring for *kṛṣṇa-prema*, the highest goal of human life, should always avoid bad association (*asat-saṅga*) and mundane gossip (*prajalpa*), and should

respectfully follow the limbs of devotional service including enthusiasm (*utsāha*), determination (*niścaya*), patience (*dhairya*), hearing (*śravaṇa*), and chanting (*kīrtana*). It is essential for householder devotees (*grhastha-bhaktas*) to serve Hari, *guru*, and devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, to loudly glorify the holy names of Lord Kṛṣṇa, to associate with saintly persons, and to hear about the pastimes of Lord Hari. Auspiciousness comes when one endeavors to fully serve Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Question 89—When do devotees who have attained divine love (*premī-bhaktas*) laugh and cry?

Answer—It is very difficult to understand the activities of *premī-bhaktas*; that divine love intoxicates and directs them, sometimes making them laugh and sometimes making them cry. When devotees see Kṛṣṇa everywhere, they laugh in great happiness (*viśvaṁ pūrṇa sukhāyate*). When they see people who are disturbed and grieving, they cry out of compassion. They ignore what worldly people say. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.2.40) states:

***evaṁ-vrataḥ sva-priya-nāma-kīrtyā
jātānurāgo druta-citta ucchaiḥ
hasaty atho roditi rauti gāyaty
unmāda-van nṛtyati loka-bāhyaḥ***

Meaning: A sprout of *anurāga* and *prema* for the *nāma-saṅkīrtana* of Śrī Bhagavān, who is *ekānta-priya* (the sole beloved), grows in the hearts of saintly persons who have taken a vow of serving Bhagavān through *prema-lakṣaṇā bhakti-yoga* (loving devotional service). Their hearts melt. Their consciousness rises above that of general people, and they are beyond ordinary opinions and views. Having no shyness and no regard for popularity, they sometimes burst out laughing and sometimes weep bitterly. Sometimes they loudly call out to Bhagavān, and sometimes they sweetly sing His glories. Sometimes they dance in order to please Him.

Śrīman Mahāprabhu has said:

kibā mantra dilā, gosāñi, kibā tāra bala

*japite japite mantra karila pāgala
hāsāya, nācāya, more karāya krandana
eta śuni' guru hāsi balilā vacana
kṛṣṇa-nāma-mahā-mantrera ei ta' svabhāva
yei jape, tāra kṛṣṇe upajaye bhāva
kṛṣṇa-nāme phala premā—sarva-śāstre kaya
bhāgye sei premā tomāya karila udaya
premāra svabhāve kare citta-tanu-kṣobha
kṛṣṇera caraṇa prāptye upajaya lobha
premāra svabhāve bhakta hāse, kāṇde, gāya
unmatta haīyā nāce, iti-uti dhāya*

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta)

Meaning—Śrīman Mahāprabhu said, "I went to my *gurudeva* and asked him, 'O *gurudeva*! What type of *mantra* have you given me? How powerful it is! Chanting this *mantra* drives me mad. Sometimes it makes me laugh, sometimes it makes me dance, and sometimes it makes me cry.' Hearing this, Śrī Gurudeva told me that the *Kṛṣṇa-nāma Mahā-mantra* has such a nature; attachment for Kṛṣṇa arises in the hearts of those who chant or sing it. A devotee, controlled by divine love, sometimes laughs, sometimes cries, sometimes sings, and sometimes acts as if he were mad, running and dancing here and there."

Question 90—What is the religion for *Kali-yuga*?

Answer—*Hari-nāma saṅkīrtana* (loud congregational chanting of the holy names of Lord Kṛṣṇa) is the religious principle (*dharma*) of *Kali-yuga*.

*harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam
kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā*

Bṛhan-nāradya Purāṇa states that in *Kali-yuga*, one can only be delivered by *hari-nāma*. There is no other way, no other way, no other way of deliverance. It is mentioned elsewhere in scriptures:

*kali-yuga-dharma—kṛṣṇa-nāma saṅkīrtana
niraparādhe nāma laile pāya prema-dhana*

This means that the *dharma* of *Kali-yuga* is *kṛṣṇa-nāma saṅkīrtana*. If one avoids all offenses and takes

shelter of *hari-nāma*, one certainly obtains *kṛṣṇa-prema-dhana*, the wealth of love of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This is also stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 12.3.52:

***kṛte yad dhyāyato viṣṇum tretāyām yajato makhaiḥ
dvāpare paricaryāyām kalau tad dhari-kīrtanāt***

The purport is that whatever result was obtained in Satya-yuga by meditation, in Tretā-yuga by fire sacrifice, or in Dvāpara-yuga by Deity worship is obtained in Kali-yuga by *hari-nāma-kīrtana*. Everything is accomplished by performing *kīrtana* of the names of Śrī Hari. Meditation is prescribed in Satya-yuga, but in the Age of Kali it is not possible for one to properly meditate because the mind is very fickle. Therefore, in Kali-yuga great emphasis has been placed on the only effective meditation (*mahā-dhyāna*); chanting the holy names is that great meditation (*mahā-dhyāna*). In Satya-yuga various forms of ineffective meditation (*alpa-dhyāna*) were popular; however, it was not possible to attain a vision of Śrī Gaurasundara, the personification of magnanimity (*audārya-vigraha*), in that way. Therefore, in Kali-yuga the most effective form of meditation in the form of *saṅkīrtana* has been arranged, through which it is possible to have a vision of Śrī Gaurasundara. [Therefore, the only effective meditation (*mahā-dhyāna*) in Kali-yuga is *harināma-saṅkīrtana*. Various forms of ineffective meditation (*alpa-dhyāna*) are popular, but they cannot give *darśana* of Śrī Gaurasundara, the personification of magnanimity (*audārya-vigraha*).] Meditation was the means of attaining perfection in Satya-yuga, but when defects arose in the process of meditation, fire sacrifices (*yajñas*) were performed to satisfy Bhagavān in Tretā-yuga. Therefore there is a process of performing a great sacrifice (*mahā-yajña*) of congregational chanting of the holy names (*hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana*) in Kali-yuga. When defects arose in *yajñas*, which was the means of perfection in Tretā-yuga, Deity worship (*arcana-vidhī*) was performed to satisfy Him in Dvāpara-yuga. Thus, effective Deity worship (*mahā-arcana*) during Kali-yuga is accomplished through *śrī*

kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana. If a patient does not get well after being given various gentle medicines, the physician gives him a poison pill, telling him that it has great potency. Similarly, *śrī-harināma-saṅkīrtana* is prescribed in Kali-yuga due to the extreme plight of the living entities.

All potency is fully present in *śrī-nāma*; thus, *hari-nāma-kīrtana* and *śrī-nāma-bhajana* are the greatest meditation (*mahā-dhyāna*), the greatest sacrifice (*mahā-yajña*), and the greatest means of Deity worship (*mahā-arcana*). The meditation (*dhyāna*), worship (*arcana*), and fire sacrifice (*yajña*) performed for the pleasure of Lord Kṛṣṇa are common and ordinary (*sādhāraṇa*) practices, while chanting the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*) is the greatest meditation, greatest fire sacrifice, and greatest worship. Thus, chanting can easily accomplish all of the objectives that can be achieved by meditation (*dhyāna*), worship (*arcana*), and fire sacrifice (*yajña*). *Śrī-nāma-bhajana* (the devotional service of chanting the holy names) is the *mahā-arcana*, *mahā-yajña*, and *mahā-dhyāna*. It is not appropriate to be distracted in this *mahā-dhyāna*. Therefore, intelligent persons (*buddhimāna-vyakti*) perform *harināma-saṅkīrtana* which is the greatest meditation (*mahā-dhyāna*), greatest sacrifice (*mahā-yajña*) and greatest Deity worship (*mahā-arcana*). Only those who lack intelligence (*durbuddhi*) follow other practices which do not contribute to their spiritual welfare. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* states:

***kṛṣṇa-varṇaṁ tviṣākṛṣṇāṁ sāṅgopāṅgāstra-pārṣadam
yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair yajanti hi su-medhasaḥ
saṅkīrtana-yajñe kalau kṛṣṇa-ārādhana
sei ta sumedhā pāya kṛṣṇera caraṇa***

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*)

We are instructed to worship Lord Kṛṣṇa by performing *saṅkīrtana-yajña*, sacrifice in the form of congregational chanting of the holy names, during Kali-yuga. One who does so is the most intelligent (*parama-buddhimāna*), and he attains the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.

Question 91—What are the thoughts of a devotee?

Answer—Liberated persons do not desire liberation. Devotees are indeed liberated; therefore, they do not desire *dharma* (mundane religiosity), *artha* (economic development), *kāma* (sense gratification), or *mokṣa* (liberation).

Devotional service is the only real happiness; such happiness cannot be attained in any other path. That is why devotees are the only truly happy people; all others must face worldly grief and disturbance. *Karmīs* (fruitive laborers), *jñānīs* (those who pursue the path of *jñāna*, or knowledge, directed toward impersonal liberation), *yogīs* [those who practice the *yoga* system with the goal of realization of the Paramātmā (Supersoul) or of merging into the Lord's personal body], *bhogīs* (sense gratifiers), and *tyāgīs* (renouncers) cannot have peace of mind because they are devoid of devotion (*bhakti*) for Lord Kṛṣṇa. "Let me be happy; others can be sad"—such thinking, known as *anya-abhilāṣa* (other desires), occurs on the paths of *karma* and *jñāna*. The devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa who tread the path of unalloyed devotional service do not want anyone to be deprived of the bliss of devotional service and love of Godhead. They desire that all the persons of this world should unite and engage in the congregational chanting (*kīrtana*) of the holy names of Lord Hari. They want that this congregational chanting of the holy names go on for twenty-four hours a day without cessation. The path of exclusive devotional service (*kevalā-bhakti*) is independent and supremely powerful. It does not need any assistance from other paths such as *karma* (fruitive activities), *jñāna* (knowledge directed towards impersonal liberation), *yoga* (path of mysticism aimed at merging in the body of Lord Viṣṇu called *īśvara-sāyujya* as taught by Patañjali) or *tyāga* (imperfect or immature renunciation based on the thought that the objects that are favorable for the devotional service of Lord Kṛṣṇa are material and are an impediment to one's spiritual

advancement). There is no need of mixing exclusive devotional service (*kevalā-bhakti*) with other paths to get success, because congregational chanting (*kīrtana*) of the holy names of Lord Hari is the only infallible weapon that does not depend on or require assistance from any other process or means. One must first hear this *kīrtana* with submissive ears from the lips of pure devotees. Then all other senses automatically become favorable for rendering devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa by the power of engaging one's tongue in the glorification of Lord Kṛṣṇa's holy names. As a result of pure congregation chanting of the holy names of Lord Kṛṣṇa, one can have a vision of Bhagavān's transcendental form (*rūpa*), qualities (*guṇa*), specialties (*vaiśiṣṭya*), and pastimes (*līlās*). By accepting these thoughts, the devotees will advance on the path of gradual progress (*krama-panthā*) in devotional service. [Note: Here the path of gradual progress in devotional service (*krama-panthā*) means: (1) to take shelter of pure devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, (2) to engage in hearing Lord Kṛṣṇa's holy names from their lotus mouths, (3) to utilize one's full time—twenty-four hours a day—in nicely chanting and remembering the Lord's divine name, transcendental form, qualities and eternal pastimes, (4) to gradually engage one's tongue and mind in devotional service of Lord Kṛṣṇa.]

Question 92—What is the nature of Bhagavān's *janma-līlā* (birth pastime)?

Answer—Mother Śacī and Jagannātha Miśra are *nitya-siddha parikara* (eternally perfected associates); their heart and body consist of pure, transcendental goodness (*śuddha-sattva*). Their heart and body are not material like the heart and body of conditioned living entities (*baddha-jīvas*). Vasudeva is the personification of *viśuddha-sattva*. The son of Vasudeva, who performs spiritual pastimes (*cid-vilāsī* Vāsudeva), manifests only in the heart of Vasudeva. Ordinary men and women engage in sex life to satisfy the senses of their mundane bodies, which consist of material

elements such as blood and flesh. The union of Jagannātha Miśra and Śacī-devī is not comparable to such mundane sex life, and Śacī-devī's pregnancy is not the result of such mundane sex life. To think that the two are the same is an offense. When one's heart is inclined to serve Bhagavān, one can understand the glories of the transcendental womb of Śacī-devī, who is *śuddha-sattva-maya* (embodiment of unadulterated goodness). In his commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Śrīdhara Svāmīpāda says:

***manaḥ āviveśa manasī āvirvabhūva,
jīvānāmiva na dhātu-sambandha ityarthah***

In this connection, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhu describes in the book (*grantha*) *Laghu-Bhāgavatāmṛta* that Kṛṣṇa first appears in the heart of Vasudevajī, and from there He manifests in the heart of Devakījī. It is stated in the thirteenth chapter of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi-līlā*:

***jagannātha miśra kahe,—svapna ye dekhila
jyotirmaya-dhāma mora hṛdaye paśila
āmāra hṛdaya haite gelā tomāra hṛdaye
hena bujhi, janmibena kona mahāśaye***

Meaning—Jagannātha Miśra said to Śacī-devī, “In my dream, I saw a very bright form enter my heart. Then, that form went from my heart to your heart. From this, it seems that some great personality will definitely appear.”

Question 93—How can we attain Śrī Rādhārāṇī right now?

Answer—It is not that Śrī Rādhārāṇī is not here and is inaccessible. If we see the beauty of Her toenails in Śrī Gurudeva, we can attain Her and Her service now; then, the thought of how we can attain Her will never arise. Śrī Gurudeva is a personal associate of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and is a non-different manifestation of Her. Śrī Gurudeva, who is in *madhura-rasa* (sweet conjugal mellow), is a *priya-sakhī* (beloved confidante) of Śrī Rādhārāṇī, and he is non-different from Her. Only devotees dedicated to their spiritual master, and who have taken shelter of *madhura-*

rasa, will have the great fortune of seeing in Śrī Gurudeva the beauty of Śrī Rādhārāṇī's toenails. Only affectionate disciples of *guru* can realize that Śrī Gurudeva is an expansion (*prakāśa-mūrti*) or non-different (*abhinna*) manifestation of Vārṣabhānavī Śrī Rādhājī, the daughter of Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja.

Question 94—How should we view events?

Answer—Śrīla Prabhupāda looks at Lord Kṛṣṇa and says, “As long as we look towards Kṛṣṇa, everything is fine. However, if we look away from Him and consider ourselves and others to be doers, we will see everything upside-down.”

Looking towards Kṛṣṇa is the descending or deductive process (*avaroha-panthā* or *śrauta-panthā*), and looking away from Him is the ascending or inductive process (*āroha-panthā*). Trying to understand with the intelligence of measuring, in the false ego of being the doer instead of seeing Bhagavān as the doer, results in distress.

Question 95—What is the condition of the *jīvas* at the present time?

Answer—We are busy with this temporary body which will last only for a few days (or years). We do not think even slightly about what our duty in life is, and what will happen after death. Mundane discussions about various religions are actually deceptive. [During everyday conversations about religious principles, ordinary people tend to only discuss religions that are considered deceitful.] The scriptures state:

***pr̥thivīte jata kathā dharma nāme cale
bhāgavata kahe saba paripūrṇa chale***

That is, according to *Bhāgavata*, popular ideas about worldly religion are full of misconceptions. [As per *Bhāgavata*, all of the discussions that take place in the name of religion on Earth are deceitful.]

It is very important to consider whether we are

moving forward in spiritual life or going backward. People who are *mano-dharmī* (mental speculators) by nature always move in the opposite direction of truth. Śrī Caitanyadeva taught how to move forward on the path of real truth. Those who arrogantly think that they will become *Brahma* are lost in illusion. It is essential that such persons be delivered. Before dying, one should understand two things very well. The thousands of opinions prevalent in India can be put in perspective only if one has the good fortune of associating with devotees of Śrī Caitanya-deva.

Short-sighted people spend their days eating food mixed with the stool of the *tela-caṭṭā* insect (cockroach which eats oil). They think that there is nothing to eat except this. Some people say that there is no need to live in the material world, and that peace can only be achieved by extinguishing one's existence (*sattā*); this is the idea (*vicāra*) of Śākya-simha Buddha (*acinmātra-vāda*). Śaṅkarācārya taught that everything other than spiritual substance or *cetana* (*cinmātra*) is false. People with the mentality of *acetana-vāda* or *jaḍa-vāda* (materialism) often promote altruistic ideas or philanthropy (*paropakāra-vicāra*), and they keep busy collecting worldly knowledge. However, one should carefully consider what consciousness (*cetana-vastu*) is.

One opposing force (Lord Kṛṣṇa's material potency *māyā*) is deluding and cheating the conditioned living entities, but if they discuss the pastimes of Bhagavān, they will not fall into *māyā*'s trap. When we see the whole world as a servant of Bhagavān, there will be no sorrow. All of our troubles are due to lack of cultivating devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-anuśīlana*). Mahāprabhu summarized what Śrī Kṛṣṇa said in the *Gītā*:

***jīvera svarūpa haya kṛṣṇera nitya-dāsa
kṛṣṇera taṭasthā-śakti bhedābheda-prakāśa
kṛṣṇa bhuli sei jīva anādi bahir-mukha
ataeva māyā tāre deya saṁsārādi duḥkha***

Meaning—The living entity's constitutional position is as an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. As a manifestation of

Kṛṣṇa's marginal energy he is simultaneously one with Kṛṣṇa and different from Him. Because he has forgotten Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the *jīva* has been absorbed in his attempts to enjoy the material energy since time immemorial. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa's *māyā-śakti* awards the *jīva* the various sufferings of *saṁsāra*.

Bhagavān is saying, "O *jīva*! You have been a non-devotee (*bahir-mukha*) since time immemorial. You were able to render devotional service (*antarmukha-dharma*); you could have served Me, but instead you expected service from Me. Although your origin is the Absolute Bhagavān, you wanted to enjoy independently, so you acquired the material propensity to measure. Do you want to be the Lord? Do you not know that you are My servant?" We are servants of Bhagavān. If we do not serve Him and want to be served by Him, we can never achieve auspiciousness. Hari is the Lord of all and all others are His servants. Listening to His pastimes constitutes His service. [When we hear about Bhagavān's pastimes, we are actually serving Him with our organ of aural reception or ears]. Discussions of worldly dealings are not *hari-kathā*. Those who speak about the pastimes of Bhagavān are real *gurus*, and those who listen are real disciples (*śiṣyas*). Those who hear *hari-kathā* must be submissive and surrendered to the spiritual master. Auspiciousness will not manifest if *hari-kathā* is spoken in the presence of doubters or skeptics. One should be eager to hear *hari-kathā*. It is very essential that the listeners be inquisitive. If there is an opportunity to waste time, other thoughts will arise in the mind. If we are fortunate, we will search for and inquire about pure *hari-kathā*. Only then will we pass the better way. In other words, only then will we enter the path of righteousness (*san-mārga*).

The day we do not get an opportunity to discuss the pastimes of Bhagavān is indeed a bad day (*dur-dina*), much more so than an overcast day. Scriptures state:

***tad-dinaṁ durdinaṁ manye,
meghayācchanna na durdinam***

***yad-dinaṁ kṛṣṇa-saṁlāpa-
kathā-pīyūṣa-varjjitam***

Translation: A cloudy day is not inauspicious, but a day devoid of discussing *kṛṣṇa-kathā* is truly inauspicious.

Question 96—How will we be introduced to our eternal nature (*svarūpa*)?

Answer—If we do not remember that we have a real spiritual body (*vāstava-deha*), we will stay confused in the false ego of being a material body. We will continue to identify our dull material body to be the real self. *Adhokṣaja-vastu* is beyond the grasp of the mundane knowledge-acquiring senses. The Lord is Hṛṣīkeśa; we have to serve Him with our senses, but those senses must be spiritual. One obtains his eternal spiritual form that is full of knowledge and bliss (*cit-ānanda-svarūpa*) by the mercy (*kṛpā*) of Śrī Gurudeva. One can serve the Supersoul only with the soul. That is, one can only serve Bhagavān, the embodiment of knowledge, bliss, and eternity (*sat-cit-ānanda*), with his spiritual body (*vāstava-deha*). One serves Hṛṣīkeśa with one's spiritual senses. One who does not serve Adhokṣaja Bhagavān is like an animal. One should always associate with saintly persons. The devotees of Bhagavān are the true saintly persons, and they are always busy serving Him. Our propensity to give happiness to Bhagavān will awaken when we get their association. Saintly persons give us an idea of our eternal body, and then we will stop regarding the material body to be the soul. In this way, the desire for one's own happiness, which ruins everything, will be eliminated forever.

Bhaktas are neither sense enjoyers (*bubhukṣus*) nor renunciants (*mumuṣus*, persons who desire *mukti* through the dissolution of their gross and subtle bodies). They are engrossed in serving Bhagavān, and they are intent on pleasing Him. Sense gratifiers try to cheat Bhagavān by enjoying their senses. *Māyāvādīs* (impersonalists) try to cheat Bhagavān by becoming Bhagavān. Devotees do not

have these bad propensities. By the influence of devotional service, they are situated in their constitutional form (*svarūpa*), and they are spiritually intoxicated in their true ego of being a servant of the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*sevaka-abhimāna*).

The constitutional nature of a living being is to serve Bhagavān. This spiritual nature is awakened by *bhagavat-sevā* in the association of servants of Bhagavān, and once it is awakened there will be no more endeavors for material objects (*virūpa*).

Question 97—Why is one devoid of the tendency to serve Bhagavān likened to an animal?

Answer—An animal does not know that devotional service to Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa is the duty of the living entity. Animals know only how to satisfy their senses and the senses of their kind (*jāti*). They know nothing other than this. If a person is only concerned with satisfying his senses and achieving personal happiness, and he does not care about making Bhagavān happy, and he simply keeps busy like animals in eating and sensuous enjoyment, then what can be said about him except that he is like an animal disguised as a human being (*nara-paśu*)?

Eagerness to make Lord Kṛṣṇa happy (*kṛṣṇa-sukha-kāmanā*), or devotional service, is the *dharma* of the living entity. Those who have such *bhakti* can actually be called *mānava*, or a human being descended from Manu, the progenitor of mankind. ***Dharmeṇa hīnā paśubhiḥ samānā***—an animal is only concerned with its own welfare (animalism, zoomorphism, *paśutva*) and sense enjoyment (*kāmukatva*), while an actual human (*vāstava-manuṣya*) wants to make Lord Kṛṣṇa happy.

Question 98—Is *dharma* created by human beings?

Answer—Never. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states:
***dharmaṁ tu sākṣād bhagavat-praṇītaṁ
na vai vidur ṛṣayo nāpi devāḥ***

***na siddha-mukhyā asurā manuṣyāḥ
kuto nu vidyādhara-cāraṇādayaḥ***

The principles of religion, and the eternal occupational duty of every living entity, are established directly by Bhagavān. Great sages such as Bhṛgu, in whom the mode of goodness is prominent, do not know the principles of religion, nor do the demigods (*devatās*), perfected beings (*siddhas*), demons (*asuras*), humans, Vidhyādhara, and Cāraṇa.

The religious principles of serving Bhagavān (*Bhāgavata-dharma* or *Parama-dharma*) were not created by humans. Such principles did not originate after the appearance of humans; they have existed since time without beginning, and they will exist for eternity. They cannot be changed or eliminated. That devotional service to Adhokṣaja Śrī Hari is eternal *dharma*. The human-concocted religions of this world are temporary and inferior, and are opposed to *parama-dharma*. Duties related to the body (*deha-dharma*), and mental exercises (*mano-dharma*), are not part of *bhāgavata-dharma*, *parama-dharma*, or *ātma-dharma*. Therefore, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇacandra instructs in the *Gītā* that one should give up all other religious principles and accept only the eternal religious principle (*nitya-dharma*) of taking shelter of Bhagavān (*bhagavad-āśraya*).

***sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja
ahaṁ tvāṁ sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ***

Bhāgavata-dharma is the eternal function (*nitya-vṛtti*) of the soul (*ātmā*). The soul existed before humans were created (*mānava-sṛṣṭi*), and its function—devotional service—is eternal. Endeavors to reveal this eternal function of the soul are known as *sādhana*, or devotional practice.

The purpose of standard moral principles (*sādhāraṇa-naitika-dharma*) is to transform a person of animalistic nature into one worthy of being called a proper human being. Devotional service to Bhagavān (*bhāgavata-dharma*) is above such principles; its eternal goal (*nitya-*

prayojana) is to give living entities the qualification to serve Bhagavān, who is superior (*parātapara*) to even great personalities like Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva. The gist of everything is that *bhāgavata-dharma* gives no consideration to the convenience or worldly desires of humans or animals (*suvidhā-vāda*); it is concerned solely with providing eternal happiness to Adhokṣaja Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is imperceptible to the mundane senses. It is the only means of obtaining real, everlasting happiness (*yathārtha-sukha* or *akṣaya-sukha*).

Vox populi is not vox Dei; vox Dei should be vox populi. In other words, the people's opinion is not the voice of the Supreme Lord. Rather, great personalities (*mahājanas*) instruct that the voice of the Supreme Lord should be the opinion of saintly persons. Unfortunately, those who do not know the difference between spiritual substance and material substance (*cit-jaḍa samanvaya-vāḍī*) have the opposite mentality. They say that there are many paths and opinions that all lead to the same goal, and that the people's opinion shows the path to the Supreme Lord or reflects His opinion. How surprising this is! When religious principles are dictated by the general population (*gaṇa-mata-priyatā*), it is a sign that there is no love for the Supreme Lord. When the criterion for ascertaining truth is adopting the opinions of worldly people, society will be devoid of truth.

Question 99—Is service to Bhagavān real freedom?

Answer—Yes. We are under the control of the illusory potency (*māyā-adhīna*) and we are subordinate to others (*parādhīna*), so we cannot protect ourselves. Considering the constant danger in this world, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* instructs us to continuously cultivate devotional service (*bhagavad-anuśīlana*). We are always caught in the jaws of death, so where is our freedom in the kingdom of *māyā*? Only by serving Lord Hari (*hari-sevā*)

can we attain the eternal freedom and perfection of the soul.

Question 100—Can we achieve auspiciousness without surrender?

Answer—No. It is not possible to attain auspiciousness without fully surrendering to Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. If we do not constantly remember Lord Kṛṣṇa, we will surely be diverted. When the mood of 'I' and 'mine' is strengthened by mundane knowledge, we will certainly face disturbances. If we develop the false ego that we are enjoyers of the material world, that will certainly lead to our degradation. We are sentient beings and the world is insentient. We are trying to enjoy dull material objects (*jaḍa*). We forget our nature as servants of Bhagavān, we regard objects of the world as meant for our enjoyment, and we become subjected to the false ego of being the enjoyer. Gradually this false ego becomes stronger, and then the evil thought that one is Bhagavān completely covers the soul. When one is obsessed with becoming superior to everyone else, his path to well-being and auspiciousness is completely blocked.

Question 101—Who should live in a monastery?

Answer—People who do physical exercises are not needed in a *maṭha*, nor are those who want to be managers (*bābus*). Only devotees of Bhagavān should live in a *maṭha*.

Anyone living in a *maṭha* who is there only to satisfy his genitals and stomach should be sent away. In other words, those who are attached to women and delicacies should be sent away. In this way, the expenses of the *maṭha* will be reduced, and society will be benefited.

Deceitful persons who do not adhere to the rules and practices of the *maṭha*; who do not follow proper guidance (*ānugatya*); who lack humility; and who behave according to their own will should be sent home. It does not matter if the number of residents in a *maṭha* decreases

by this; it is improper to allow those who do not perform sincere *hari-bhajana*, and who instead seek worldly benefits (*lābha*), worship (*pūjā*), prestige (*pratiṣṭhā*), gold (*kanaka*), and women (*kāminī*), to stay. A resident of a *maṭha* should not think: “I have been living in the *maṭha* for many days and I have done so much for the *maṭha*, so now I should eat lavishly, wear expensive clothes, demand proper respect, and be given the right to half of the *maṭha* property.” Doubts, criticism of others, and gossip are unfavorable for *bhakti*, and they will take us so far away from it.

One should not think: “I am a great master; I am very intelligent; I am an important speaker; I am a talented singer.” We should be more humble than a blade of grass. If somebody attacks or condemns us, we should be tolerant and chant *hari-nāma*. We should understand that Bhagavān kindly arranged such a situation to give us an opportunity to be more meek and humble than a blade of grass (*trṇād-api sunīca*). If someone treats us badly, we should see it as a form of Bhagavān’s mercy. [When someone says mean things to us, we should believe that Bhagavān is showing kindness to us in this way.]

Question 102—Who should not have any connection with a *maṭha*?

Answer—A *maṭha* should not have any relationship with anyone who wants to live there with the intention of misusing spiritual initiation (*dīkṣā*) or transcendental knowledge (*divya-jñāna*).

Just as a boat and its captain are required to cross a river, a *guru* is required to cross this ocean of material existence. Nowadays some people are making me their *guru* with such an intention; they did not hear from me before, and I had not met them. [In reality, they have never seen me, and I have never met them either.] Such people want to follow a ritual (*vidhi*) and for this reason they accept a *guru*, but they do not try to understand the real glory of the *guru*. In this way, such people have not truly

accepted the *guru*.

We will be ruined if we imitate the spiritual master instead of following him; if we argue and debate with him; or if we try to evaluate him through our intelligence alone. We will only achieve auspiciousness if we give up such foolishness and surrender at his lotus feet.

Devotees of Bhagavān do not desire wealth (*artha*), worldly knowledge (*vidyā*), piety (*yogyatā*), or scholarship (*pāṇḍitya*), as these put one at risk for committing offense at the feet of the spiritual master and devotees. The result of such offense is that the living entity will be deprived of service to the spiritual master and Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Question 103—Whom does Bhagavān attract to Himself?

Answer—Nandanandana Kṛṣṇa is Bhagavān Himself. That transcendental black personality (*kṛṣṇa-vastu*) attracts all in the three worlds (*tri-bhuvana*). Śrī Gurudeva, beloved of Kṛṣṇa, is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's attracting potency. Only spiritual substance (*vāstava-vastu*) can be truly attractive. Who does *vāstava-vastu* Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa attract? A magnet attracts iron, not wood, because the nature of iron is similar to that of the magnet, whereas the nature of wood is different. Similarly, Bhagavān only attracts His devotees because He is spiritual substance (*cid-vastu*), and so are the living entities. However, when living entities come in contact with *māyā*, their spiritual quality becomes covered. When they take shelter at the lotus feet of *guru* and perform devotional service, their bondage (*māyā-bandhana*) is ended and their spiritual quality (*cid-guṇa*) is revealed, which naturally attracts them to Bhagavān. Living entities who are inclined to serve Bhagavān (*sevonmukha-jīva*) are attracted to Him, and they can experience His affection (*sneha*) and human-like sweetness (*mādhurya*). All-attractive Bhagavān attracts such living entities with His inconceivable power. However, if a living entity is attracted to material objects, his attraction to Bhagavān remains dormant. [If after turning

toward Bhagavān a living entity gets attracted to something other than Him, that living entity may lose attraction to the original Person, Bhagavān.]

On one side is attraction to the material world, which causes bondage, and on the other side is attraction to Kṛṣṇa. In this world, attractive form (*rūpa*), taste (*rasa*), touch (*sparsa*), smell (*gandha*), and sound (*śabda*) are very close to us, and we are attracted to them because we are weak. To resist such attraction, we should hear *hari-kathā* from the mouth of a living saintly person. If we listen to narrations of the pastimes of Bhagavān from *sādhus* and *gurus*, we will save ourselves from enemies in the form of attractive material forms, tastes, smells, and sounds. If we are not attracted to Kṛṣṇa, we will be attracted to *māyā*, His illusory potency.

Question 104—Who are the *tarka-panthī* (rationalists or followers of the path of logic and reasoning, or speculation)?

Answer—As long as one presents arguments and counter-arguments, one cannot recognize a *guru* (spiritual master). Śrī Gurudeva's words are indeed true. The desire to test the words of a revered spiritual master (Śrī Gurudeva), or to test *vāstava-satya* (transcendental truth), is the path of reasoning (*tarka-patha*). Rationalists following the path of reasoning disregard spiritual masters. Only Gurudeva is able to clear all kinds of doubts. There is no basis for logic. The truth taught by the *Vedas*, which is received through *āmnāya-dhārā*, or the *guru-paramparā* system of transmission of divine knowledge from Śrī Guru to disciple since time immemorial, can never change. One who bestows that immutable truth (*aparivartanīya-satya*) upon a disciple is called a *guru* or spiritual master. The heart of a person who is inimical to the spiritual master (*guru-drohī*) is devoted to reasoning and speculation. The thoughts that arise in such a heart are in disregard of the spiritual master and scriptures.

Question 105—How can one hear *hari-kathā* while not living in a monastery (*maṭha*) or while residing in the material world (*saṁsāra*)?

Answer—All of the devotees in our monastery are engaged in *hari-kathā* and *hari-sevā*. It is very important for one to associate with, hear from, and serve such *sādhus* who regard the service to Bhagavān and *hari-kathā* (narrations of Lord Hari's pastimes) to be their very life. One should not reside in a place where there are no narrations of Bhagavān's pastimes, even if that place has friends, relatives, wealth, and even the opulence of Indra. By Bhagavān's grace, one can experience the compassion of Mahāprabhu by associating with the residents of a *maṭha*, who are engaged in *hari-kathā* and *hari-sevā*.

Those virtuous persons concerned about their well-being should occasionally go to a *maṭha* (monastery) and listen with reverence to narrations about Bhagavān from a *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. Only if we have taste for such narrations and service to Bhagavān will we be saved from bad association. When we study spiritual magazines and books written by great devotees, we can get the same benefit as directly hearing *hari-kathā* from those great devotees if we beg Śrī Guru and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu for their mercy.

Although we cannot see the eternal associates (*parikaras*) of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu who have come to this Earth from the abode of Bhagavān to deliver the conditioned living entities, we are fortunate to have their teachings and books that describe their lives. Therefore, we should never be hopeless. (In other words, we should not get discouraged and think that there is nothing that we can do.) Mahāprabhu's associates are not in front of us now, so how will we achieve auspiciousness? We should always follow the books, teachings, and transcendental life example of those great associates. If we remain absorbed in narrations of Bhagavān's pastimes in a *maṭha*, we shall certainly attain auspiciousness and nothing can hinder our path to auspiciousness.

We can live anywhere according to Bhagavān's will, as long as we hear narrations of Bhagavān's pastimes. In this way, even in the midst of worldly work and other matters, we can experience the grace of God, remembrance of God, and devotion to God. In whatever situation Bhagavān is happy to keep his devotees, they should remain steady in that state, give up all sorrow, and praise God. While associating with *sādhus* and hearing *hari-kathā*, a tendency to serve God will certainly develop in our heart, and at this stage we will be able to remember Bhagavān. Bhagavān always hides behind a veil in order to test us. When we are able to see Bhagavān's mercy behind every incident, no distress or lamentation will bother us.

This material world is a place of examination (*parīkṣā*) for living entities, and in order to pass the examinations, we will certainly have to hear about Bhagavān's pastimes from pure devotees. Although it may not be possible to hear *hari-kathā* from the mouth of a *sādhū* all of the time, we can still benefit from *sat-saṅga* (good association) by discussing the scriptures among ourselves. [Although we may not always have the opportunity to listen to *hari-kathā* (divine discourse) directly from the mouths of saints, if we engage in self-study and listen to *hari-kathā* through the medium of literary analysis of the scriptures, we will not lack the company of saintly persons (*sat-saṅga*).] Devotees of Bhagavān see Him everywhere, while non-devotees hate Him and deny His existence. But we find ourselves somewhere in the middle of these two perspectives. One moment we have taste (*ruci*) for spiritual matters, and the next moment we forget Bhagavān and indulge in worldly pleasures (*viṣaya-bhogas*). If our desire to serve Bhagavān prevails, we will automatically become averse to sense pleasures. Worldly life consists of temporary happiness and sorrow, whereas God eternally enjoys being served. That is why we should serve Bhagavān and make Him happy. [For this reason, we always remain dedicated to serving Bhagavān for His

happiness.]

Question 106—Is there a special need to associate with Vaiṣṇavas?

Answer—Certainly. Association with *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, and loyalty to *guru*, are particularly auspicious. We are completely unqualified because we are full of unwanted habits (*anarthas*). If we do not associate with Vaiṣṇavas, how can we learn Vaiṣṇava etiquette, and how can we learn how to serve the spiritual master, devotees, and Bhagavān? One should always have a good role model (*ādarśa*). A Vaiṣṇava is very loyal to his spiritual master, the holy name of Bhagavān, and his service to Bhagavān, so if we do not associate with a Vaiṣṇava and make him our role model, how will our dedication to *guru*, our mood of possessiveness for him, our mood (*buddhi*) that the *guru* is our master (*īśvara*), and our propensity to serve Bhagavān arise? If a sincere devotee dedicated to his spiritual master (*guru-niṣṭha* Vaiṣṇava) does not tell us how to serve the spiritual master and how to behave with him, we will lose *sad-guru* even if we have already found him, and we will be deprived of *guru-sevā* even if we are physically close to him.

Question 107—Should we happily accept all of Bhagavān's arrangements?

Answer—Certainly. Bhagavān is auspiciousness personified (*maṅgala-maya-vastu*), so His arrangements are all-auspicious. It is impossible for any of His arrangements to be inauspicious. All of the arrangements of the merciful Lord are for the best and full of kindness. It is all for the best. Whatever Bhagavān does is for our well-being, but there is a need to understand His mercy.

When Bhagavān puts one in a particular situation, one should silently accept it as His grace and stay in the same situation. Both His punishment (*daṇḍa*) and mercy (*kṛpā*) are for the ultimate welfare of the living entities. We welcome rewards from Bhagavān's *māyā-śakti* (illusory

potency), but we reject chastisement (*tiraskāra*) or punishment as painful. However, the ultimate purpose of such punishment of *māyā* is to make one fit to receive Bhagavān's grace; therefore, devotees do not disrespect that punishment. They respectfully, joyfully, and tolerantly accept it as mercy of Bhagavān. Those who cannot see worldly loss and failure as God's mercy continue to fruitlessly struggle in search for worldly progress and happiness, only to find despair in the end.

Everything happens by Bhagavān's desire. Therefore, if any suffering comes, one should not be disturbed and should wait for His grace. Bhagavān Śrī Nṛsiṃhadeva always protects devotees by destroying their inauspiciousness. Therefore, *sādhakas* fixed in devotional service never have to worry about their maintenance and protection. When one surrenders to Bhagavān, all of his inauspicious habits from material life are eliminated.

According to *karma* from previous births, sometimes we are healthy and sometimes unhealthy. Only when we feel healthy do we become averse to Lord Kṛṣṇa and begin to consider ourselves superior to devotees. Kṛṣṇa, considering our plight, has arranged for various kinds of suffering, distress, and obstacles for our welfare, because in such circumstances devotees try to understand the meaning of the verse *tat te 'nukampāṁ*.

We should accept and be satisfied with whatever makes Kṛṣṇa happy. If keeping me away from Him makes Kṛṣṇa happy, I should gladly accept whatever suffering comes as a result of that. *Kṛṣṇera sevāya duḥkha haya jata, seo ta parama sukha*—suffering that comes while serving Kṛṣṇa is a source of great pleasure. Vaiṣṇavas have such a realization, and we should follow this.

Question 108—Does *aśauca* (impurity resulting from death of a relative or from committing sinful acts) apply to Vaiṣṇavas?

Answer—No. There is no consideration of *aśauca* for Vaiṣṇavas, whether householder or renounced. Only

serving Bhagavān makes everything, including *pitr-śrāddha* (offering oblations to the forefathers) and *pitr-tarpaṇa* (pleasing the forefathers), successful. [Engaging in the service of God automatically accomplishes all acts related to ancestral rituals and offerings to ancestors.] Therefore, Vaiṣṇavas need not perform *śrāddha-tarpaṇa* and other such rituals separately from their devotional service. However, for the sake of following good behavior and social etiquette (*loka-vyavahāra*), a householder devotee should first become sanctified by chanting *hari-nāma*, and then perform the *śrāddha* of the forefathers eleven days after a death (or any other day) by offering them *mahā-prasāda*. [Note: one must not perform *śrāddha* on Ekādaśī day].

Question 109—When will we understand that the holy name (*śrī-nāma*) is directly Kṛṣṇa Himself?

Answer—The holy name of Bhagavān and Bhagavān are non-different. We will realize this only when our *anarthas* (unwanted habits) are eliminated. On the day we give up *aparādhās* (offences) and chant *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, we will understand that all kinds of *siddhis* (mystic perfections) are attained by chanting the holy name. When *anarthas* are eliminated by performing *kīrtana* of *śrī-nāma*, *śrī-nāma* will give a revelation of His form (*rūpa*), qualities (*guṇa*), and pastimes (*līlā*). At that time, one does not have to try to artificially remember them by one's own effort. One's perfected spiritual form (*siddha-svarūpa*) will awaken by the influence of offenseless chanting of the holy name, which eliminates the propensity for one to consider the gross and subtle bodies to be the real self. When the *siddha-svarūpa* manifests, one realizes the transcendental nature (*aprākṛtatva*) of *kṛṣṇa-rūpa*. Only Lord Kṛṣṇa's holy name can awaken the pure form (*śuddha-svarūpa*) of the living entity, and attract him to Lord Kṛṣṇa's form. Only Bhagavān's *nāma* can reveal His qualities in the heart of the living entity, and attract him to Kṛṣṇa's qualities. Only *kṛṣṇa-nāma* can reveal the activities of the soul of the living

entity, and attract him to the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa.

Service to the holy name means that the chanter must be sincere about the goal he wants to achieve (*prayojanīya-anuṣṭhāna*).

All of this will happen by the mercy of the holy name as one continues to chant. One develops taste for chanting the holy name by proper hearing and reading, and by following the instructions of the scriptures.

Question 110—By doing what can we achieve happiness?

Answer—We will achieve complete auspiciousness by applying our intelligence (*matī*) to realizing Bhagavān and by calling out His holy name. My request is that you do so. Only Bhagavān can arrange for worldly advancement, ease of endeavor, and struggle. We are under His protection and we should be surrendered (*śaraṇāgata*) to Him. Our duty is to accept happily whatever arrangements He makes for us.

Question 111—Is there hope for our welfare without *guru-sevā* (service to the spiritual master)?

Answer—No. How can one achieve auspiciousness without serving Śrī Gurudeva, who has come to bestow auspiciousness, who is the embodiment of auspiciousness, and who is the only shelter of the living entities? Śrī Gurudeva is a great personality (*mahā-puruṣa*) who has descended from Vaikuṇṭha by the inspiration of Bhagavān. How can one go to Vaikuṇṭha without taking shelter of him and serving him; that is, without accepting his company? The grace of the *guru* is the root of all auspiciousness. What must we do to obtain his mercy? That is why I am bowing to the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva and abandoning my false ego. Offering obeisances (*namaskāra*) means giving up the false ego of ‘I am the seer (*draṣṭā*)’ and ‘I am the enjoyer (*bhoktā*).’ This is why the word *namaḥ* is in the *mantra*.

The wicked ego ‘I am the doer’ is removed by the

grace of Śrī Gurudeva, and he replaces it with the pure ego 'I am a servant of Bhagavān.' Worldly pride (*jāgatika-abhimāna*), false ego (*ahaṅkāra*), thoughtlessness (*avicāra*), and bad thoughts (*kuvicāra*) are eliminated by grace (*kṛpā*) and service (*sevā*). For years I was not attracted to worshiping Śrī Gurudeva. It is my only duty to serve him, which I understood only by his mercy. Instead of following a blind person, one should follow and worship Śrī Gurudeva, who has spiritual eyes. Śrī Gurudeva is my only friend, well-wisher (*ātmīya*), and protector, which I understood by his grace. Only after seeing his lotus feet did I realize the wisdom that I have no duty other than serving him. Śrī Gurudeva is a very dear servant of Bhagavān. In order to save me from false ego, when he, a personal associate (*nija-jana*) of Bhagavān, kindly taught me how to serve Nanda-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa, only then did I come to know that the living entity has no duty other than to satisfy Lord Kṛṣṇa's senses. Nanda-nandana is the only worshipable Deity for the living entities. He is the very life, ornament and entirety (all wealth) of the living entities. Śrī Gurudeva is very dear to Nanda-nandana.

An unworthy person like me is unable to serve Śrī Gurudeva by body (*tana*), mind (*mana*), and speech (*vacana*). Still, Śrī Gurudeva, an ocean of mercy and affection, empowers my heart with his qualities. He lovingly glances at me. Such is his mercy! If somehow I get his grace, and if I realize that I have no one in this world other than him, I will be able to receive the qualification to serve him by his causeless sincere kindness. He is satisfied only by service. The day he is pleased with me and showers his mercy on me, I will understand exactly where my supreme auspiciousness lies. At that time, nothing will attract me more than serving Guru and Lord Kṛṣṇa, and I will not want to do anything other than serving Lord Kṛṣṇa. So I pray to the lotus feet of Śrī Guru that he give me the strength to accept the power of his grace (*kṛpā-śakti*). I desire such auspiciousness from Śrī Gurudeva. Nothing compares to his mercy. What to speak of others, even Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the

Lord of Lords, is subjugated by his love. However, an unfortunate person like me cannot understand the unparalleled glory of Śrī Gurudeva. I cannot properly express my gratitude for the causeless mercy he has shown me, which I can never repay.

Question 112—What should the attitude of a sincere servant of a spiritual master be?

Answer—An innocent disciple is *guru-devatātmā*—he regards his *guru* to be as dear to him as Devatā or Īśvara, the Supreme Lord, and as his own soul (*ātmā*). The disciple always has the conception (*abhimāna*) that, “Śrī Gurudeva is my eternal lord, and I am his eternal servant.” Service to his spiritual master is his very life, ornament (decoration), and existence; in other words, he knows no one other than his spiritual master. Being under the guidance (*ānugatya*) of his spiritual master means that when sleeping, dreaming, eating, and performing devotional service he wants to please his *guru*. The disciple knows that Śrī Gurudeva, who is very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa, is a divine personality who has the same nature (*īśvaratva*) and independence (*svatantratā*) as the Supreme Lord. In other words, he is *īśvara-vastu* and *svatantra-vastu*. A disciple should think: “Śrī Gurudeva may or may not accept service from an unworthy person like me, but I am ready to sincerely serve him by body, mind, and speech. Only if he chastises me will I be able to understand my lack of qualification. [I will be able to understand my inadequacy only if he kicks (chastises) me]. Śrī Gurudeva is genuine. I must assure that momentary sense pleasure does not make me averse to serving Śrī Gurudeva, who is real substance (*vāstava-satya*). [I should be cautious so that fleeting worldly pleasures do not make me turn away even for a moment from the true reality of serving Śrī Gurudeva.] My only prayer is that Śrī Gurudeva mercifully accept my service. May he shower such mercy that I never engage in bad association, and I never leave his service. Although I am unfit, I have full faith that he

shows more mercy to unworthy persons; that is my conviction. May I develop more and more hope and greed to render service to Śrī Gurudeva to obtain his causeless mercy. [I should become more and more covetous to serve Śrī Gurudeva to obtain his causeless grace.]”

Question 113—What is the nature of *hari-nāma*?

Answer—*Hari-nāma* is not a material sound or an imaginary substance (*kālpanika-vastu*). He is not part of this visible world (*dṛśya-vastu*). He is an incarnation of Lord Hari; He is directly Bhagavān. The holy name is Hari; He is a transcendental, complete substance. He is *svayaṁ-sarva-śaktimāna* Bhagavān, the all-powerful Supreme Personality of Godhead. *Śrī-nāma* can take initiative. *Śrī-nāma* has the power to act. The transcendental holy name (*aprākṛta-nāma*) is *nāmī* (Lord Kṛṣṇa, the possessor of the holy name). *Hari-nāma* is the self-effulgent object. *Aprākṛata-nāma* is itself *nāmī* (the source of the holy name), *aprākṛta-nāma* is the source of the transcendental form (*rūpī*), *aprākṛta-nāma* is endowed with transcendental associates (*parikaras*), and *aprākṛta-nāma* is endowed with pastimes (*līlās*). He [*Aprākṛta-nāma*] has transcendental form, transcendental qualities, transcendental associates, and transcendental pastimes. There is no difference between *nāma*, the holy name, and *nāmī*, the possessor of the holy name, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The divine holy name is transcendental sound vibration (*śabda-brahma*). The holy name and Lord Kṛṣṇa are non-different. Lord Kṛṣṇa has descended in this Age of Kali, the Iron Age of quarrel and hypocrisy, in the form of *nāma*. The holy name is the all-pervading, boundless Supreme Consciousness (*vibhu-cetana*), and He can speak. Those who chant *hari-nāma* are also *cetana-vastu* (conscious or sentient beings). They say, “O *hari-nāma*! I am Your slave; I have accepted Your guidance (*ānugatya*).”

Those who chant *hari-nāma* are the servants of *Hari-nāma* Prabhu. Kṛṣṇa Himself has come to this world in the form of His holy name. That is why we take complete

shelter of *hari-nāma*; we will go nowhere else.

Question 114—Is there a simple, natural means for attaining ultimate welfare other than *hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana*?

Answer—Other than *hari-nāma*, there is no way to bring about auspiciousness. In this material world, one who has no interest in mundane religious activities (*dharma*) and fruitive work (*karma*) only chants *hari-nāma*. *Hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana* is the only means of attaining perfection. There is no other method besides this *hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana* to attain Vaikuṇṭha (the divine abode). *Hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana* is the only means of going to Vaikuṇṭha, and the only means of achieving the ultimate goal, *kṛṣṇa-prema*. There is no means of attaining perfection other than *hari-nāma saṅkīrtana*. The highest goal of living entities is love for Lord Kṛṣṇa, and this is obtained through the medium of *nāma-saṅkīrtana*.

The scriptures state:

***harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam
kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā***

That is, in this Kali-yuga there is no way, there is no way, there is no way to attain auspiciousness other than *hari-nāma*. In this verse, the word ‘no’ is used three times to emphasize that *hari-nāma* is the only means.

kalau tu nāma-mātreṇa pūjyate bhagavān hariḥ
(*Nārāyaṇa-saṁhitā*)

In this Age of Kali, the Supreme Personality of Godhead is worshipped simply by the chanting of His holy names.

Question 115—What is the duty of a human being?

Answer—There are two types of considerations: those concerning one’s well-being (*śreyaḥ-para*), and those concerning worldly matters (*preyaḥ-para*). Humans should endeavor for the former (*śreyaḥ*). Worldly things (*preyaḥ*) may be easily achieved, but *śreyaḥ* or *bhakti* (devotion) is very rare. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states that

after many births, one receives the human form of life, so it is very rare. Although a human birth is impermanent, *bhakti* can be attained in it. **Bhagavān can be attained in one birth by abandoning one's minute independence, taking refuge in Bhagavān, and engaging sincerely in devotional service, giving up duplicity.** One should not delay for a moment, as the time of death is unknown, and one should constantly strive for one's well-being. Sense gratification can be attained in all types of births, but *bhakti* is only possible in the human form.

We may get various types of bodies, and sense gratification is assured in all of them. Even if we do not get the human form of life, we will still experience sense gratification.

As a human, one should only endeavor for *śreyah* or spiritual welfare of oneself; *preyaḥ* or endeavor for worldly sense gratification is for animals. Only human beings can listen to and discuss narrations of Bhagavān's pastimes. Animals cannot discuss spiritual topics among themselves. Therefore, only humans can attain *śreyah*. If despite receiving the human form of life, a person ignores his spiritual welfare (*ātma-kalyāṇa*), his birth as a human is no better than birth as an animal or bird. We should use our intelligence and sense of discrimination. Even if we receive birth in the species of demigods, we will still be engaged only in sense gratification, and their happiness in that is material and impermanent. *Kṣīṇe punye marttyalokaṁ viśanti*—when their pious merit (*pūṇya*) is exhausted, living entities in the heavenly planet (*svarga-loka*) have to go to the planet of the mortals (*mṛtyu-loka*). This human birth comes only after much suffering. Despite receiving such a rare birth, many waste their entire lives performing worldly activities and duties. In this world, sometimes we are masters and sometimes we serve others instead of Bhagavān. Overwhelmed by various desires, we serve various demigods and demigoddesses.

Living entities worship: the sun-god to attain mundane religiosity; Gaṇeśa to attain wealth; *śakti* or

Goddess Durgā to attain sense gratification; and Lord Śiva to attain liberation (*mokṣa*) from the cycle of birth and death. However, these are not the best type of worship; they involve treating one's worshipable Deity (*ārādhya*) as a servant to fulfill desires. It is very important to know what real service is—it is activities that make one's worshipable Deity happy. Śrī Hari is the fountainhead (origin) of all, and we are His servants. When one serves Him, all are automatically served. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* gives evidence for this—***Yathā taror mūla niṣecanena***. This verse explains that just as watering the root of a tree nourishes the whole tree including branches and leaves, serving Bhagavān satisfies everyone. As long as we do not find those who can really benefit us, we will struggle on our path and face many obstacles. Only in human life can we overcome these obstacles. If we are patient and determined, and listen to narrations of Bhagavān's pastimes from the mouth of *sādhus* (saintly persons), we will not be attracted to the beautiful forms, tastes, fragrances, touches, and sounds of this material world, as a fish is attracted to a fisherman's hook. Rather, we will be drawn to Bhagavān's eternal attraction. Those only engaged in fulfilling worldly duties cannot understand the service of Bhagavān. We should always discuss the pastimes of Bhagavān, but what should be the nature of those discussions? They should be conducted under the authority of *sādhū-saṅga*.

One must associate with *sādhus*. Associating with worldly people leads to calamities and difficulties. If we truly associate with *sādhus*, we will definitely experience the power of Bhagavān. As soon as there is a lack of *sādhū-saṅga*, *māyā* will give us suffering.

We can become free from false ego (*jaḍa-ahaṅkāra*) only by surrender to Bhagavān; there is no other way. Bhagavān is the only complete substance (*eka-mātra pūrṇa-vastu*), and the only worshipable object (*upāsya*) and shelter (*āśraya*) for the living entities. The only way to obtain His service is to take shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī

Gurudeva, who is an expansion (*prakāśa-vigraha*) of Bhagavān and who gives information about Him. Śrī Gurudeva gives *hari-nāma*, the transcendental holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*aprākṛta śabda-brahma vaikunṭha-nāma*). One is liberated from material existence merely by a semblance (*ābhāsa*) of that holy name. One who chants the holy name of Bhagavān does not have to take birth again in a mother's womb (*māṭṛ-garbha*). If one hears for the first time about how to attain spiritual welfare but does not understand, one should hear about it again and again. One who does not take shelter of *śabda-brahma* (transcendental sound vibration) and *śruti* and *vedas* (Vedic scriptures) must return to this world.

We should listen to narrations of Bhagavān's pastimes only from those who can show us Bhagavān and who are personally engaged in His service twenty-four hours a day. Monasteries and temples (*maṭha-mandira*) are places of education about (*śikṣā-āgāra*) and service to (*sevā-āgāra*) Bhagavān. Devotees of Bhagavān see Śyāmasundara-Kṛṣṇa through eyes of devotion in their heart. When we receive the mercy of Vaiṣṇavas, we will also see Bhagavān in this way. If we try to see Bhagavān with our material eyes, He will appear to us as an object of this mundane world. If we are fascinated by worldly matters, we cannot know Bhagavān. Therefore, we should not waste time, and we should remember and follow Bhagavān, who is the basis of all happiness. If we do so, unwanted habits and offenses that are obstacles to having *darśana* of Bhagavān are eliminated. We will achieve the topmost auspiciousness by worshipping Lord Kṛṣṇa. The very moment we understand that Bhagavān is our Lord, all of our suffering will go away, and our lives will go smoothly. Hearing narrations about Bhagavān's pastimes and performing *kīrtana* of them leads to genuine well-being. Activities done in forgetfulness of Bhagavān bring only inauspiciousness. Currently, we have lost our *svarūpa* or nature as a servant of Bhagavān (*bhagavat-dāsatva*), and developed a relationship with the material world. We have

to awaken our eternal nature (*nitya-svabhāva*), service to Bhagavān, by establishing a relationship with Him. We cannot live in this world forever. Those who want to serve Bhagavān cannot have any desire for worldly objects, and they must be devoid of material possessions (*akiñcana*). Thus, for the benefit of the whole material world and for our own spiritual benefit, we should give up the pursuit of material possessions and serve Bhagavān.

Question 116—From whom should we hear *hrikāṭhā*?

Answer—One should listen to narrations of Bhagavān's pastimes from the lotus mouth of Śrī Gurudeva. For the pleasure of Bhagavān, one should give such narrations to faithful persons who are eager to hear them. One must never do so with faithless persons.

One should hear about the pastimes of Lord Hari from a spiritual master or *guru*, not from an atheist or heretic (*pāṣaṇḍī*). If by mistake one has accepted a non-Vaiṣṇava *guru*, one should abandon him and try to find a Vaiṣṇava *guru*.

Question 117—What is the means of attaining Bhagavān?

Answer—Serving Bhagavān is the eternal religion (*nitya-dharma*) of the living entity (*jīva*). The *jīva* has abandoned the service of Bhagavān and is pursuing many objects in this material world. All of those material objects are under the jurisdiction of creation (*utpatti*), maintenance (*sthiti*), and annihilation (*vināśa*). Living entities obtain distress instead of happiness in this temporary material world due to regarding unreal objects to be real and temporary objects to be permanent. When one's sense of discrimination (*viveka*) awakens, he becomes intelligent by seeing or hearing about the outcome of worldly objects. Then one associates with *sādhus*, and by their influence one turns to the service of Śrī Bhagavān, who is the basis of *aśoka* (lack of distress), *abhaya* (fearlessness), and

amṛta (immortality). The service of Śrī Rādhā Govinda is the ultimate goal of life (*sādhya*) for the living entities. Śrī Gaura-sundara, the combined form of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, appeared in this material world made of five elements (*prapañca-jagata*) to bestow the beautiful service of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda. One can obtain this mercy by taking shelter of *Śrī Hari-nāma*; there is no other way.

Question 118—Does a surrendered soul definitely attain auspiciousness?

Answer—Of course; the very moment we surrender we attain auspiciousness. Auspiciousness only comes when one relies on the original Proprietor. As long as we have not surrendered to Bhagavān, we can only experience inauspiciousness.

Lord Kṛṣṇa has not put us in this material world to give us tribulations (*kleśas*). We have misused our freedom, choosing inauspiciousness and distress that are consequences of the false ego of being the doer or proprietor. When we develop faith in the auspicious words of Bhagavān, that false ego of being the doer or proprietor is permanently eliminated. At that time, we will not be tempted to engage in fruitive activities, and we will surrender at His lotus feet and listen to His words.

Question 119—What are the characteristics of a surrendered soul?

Answer—Giving up one's sense of proprietorship (*kartā-pana*) and accepting Kṛṣṇa to be one's guardian are the intrinsic characteristics (*sva-rūpa-lakṣaṇa*) of surrender (*śaraṇāgati*). In other words, one should give up the misconception (*abhimāna*) that one can nourish, maintain, and protect oneself, and develop the conviction that Lord Kṛṣṇa is one's only maintainer and protector. This is the essential characteristic of a surrendered soul. One who is dependent on others (*āśrita-vyakti*) has no need to depend on one's own abilities and achievements; that is, one need not independently endeavor for one's maintenance, care,

and shelter. If we develop a desire to be protected and maintained (*pālya*) by Śrīmatī Rādhikājī, the daughter of Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja, we will not be influenced by insignificant, worldly false ego. As long as we do not develop the true ego or conception of being dependent only on Kṛṣṇa, we should understand that we have not yet surrendered. Accordingly, the false ego of being the proprietor and guardian will remain.

Question 120—Is birth as a human (*manuṣya-janma*) superior to birth as a demigod (*deva-janma*)?

Answer—Of course; birth as a human is superior to birth as a demigod. That is why demigods aspire to take birth as a human. Demigods are so engrossed in the sense pleasures of Heaven that they have no time to think about the many sorrows that they will have to experience in the future. They simply remain immersed in the intoxication of their temporary happiness. Their heavenly positions expire after some time when their pious merit (*punya*) is exhausted, and then they must return to this mortal world. ***kṣīṇe punye martya-lokaṁ viśanti.***

Compared to other living entities, human beings worry more about the future. Compared to human beings, demigods have more happiness and independence, and they have a much longer lifespan for enjoying sense gratification, but in the end they must suffer. Demigods have the pride of aristocratic birth, opulence, bodily beauty, and scholarship, and they strive to increase these qualities. Ordinary people consider demigods to be superior because they have more objects of sense gratification than human beings, but humans have the special benefit of being able to aspire for spiritual well-being because they are not fully absorbed in sense pleasures like demigods are. If people imitate demigods and maintain the false pride of prestigious birth and opulence, they will forget about their spiritual welfare. Human beings have a better opportunity to render devotional service to Bhagavān and associate with saintly persons. Therefore, birth as a human is

superior to birth as a demigod.

By repeatedly experiencing distress and sorrow in the material world, a human may realize the temporary nature of the material world and the objects within it. In contrast, demigods are so absorbed in enjoying heavenly happiness that they never contemplate the temporary nature of the material world. Thus, in the human form of life we have an opportunity to attain spiritual well-being. In this human birth, we have the potential to discriminate between what is auspicious and what is inauspicious.

Question 121—Who is our best relative (*upakāri-bandhu*)?

Answer—Our only real relative and true benefactor is one who attracts a living entity [to Lord Kṛṣṇa and saintly persons] through *hari-nāma*, the holy name of Lord Hari. The combined charity of millions of donors like Karna is far surpassed and appears insignificant (*sāmānya*) compared to the kindness of Vaiṣṇavas who propagate *hari-nāma*.

Question 122—How does one obtain grace (*kṛpā*) and spiritual potency (*śakti*)?

Answer—When a living entity takes exclusive shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva, by his mercy the potency of Kṛṣṇa advents in the heart of that living entity. The power of mercy (*kṛpā-śakti*) is strengthened by devotional service, and it gradually eliminates unwanted desires or *anarthas*. When a *sādhaka* (practitioner of devotional service) stops or becomes indifferent to devotional service, his unwanted desires begin to increase and the potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa begins to withdraw from him.

When a seed is planted and given water, it germinates. While a seedling is fragile and vulnerable, and has not grown into a strong tree, it must be protected from various kinds of harm [such as from animals and excessive rain and wind]. Similarly, a *sādhaka* must gradually increase the potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa that he has received

from his spiritual master by engaging in devotional service.

Question 123—What is devotion (*bhakti*) and non-devotion (*a-bhakti*)?

Answer—Non-devotion means relying only on knowledge acquired by the material senses (*indriya-jñāna*), and it manifests in three ways: desires other than to serve Kṛṣṇa (*anyābhilāṣa*), fruitive activities (*karma*), and speculative knowledge (*jñāna*). *Karma* involves endeavoring for the worldly happiness and comfort of oneself and others. *Jñāna* involves thinking, “I will seek neither comfort nor discomfort; I will remain indifferent.” Devotional service or *bhakti* involves abandoning reliance on worldly knowledge attained by one’s mundane senses and impersonal knowledge (*nirviśeṣa-jñāna*), and endeavoring to satisfy the senses of Śrī Hari, who is beyond sense perception (*adhokṣaja-vastu*). As long as one does not become free from the clutches of desire for sense gratification (*bhoga*) and liberation (*mokṣa*), one cannot enter the realm of *bhakti*.

Question 124—What is the difference between a person with a weak heart (*durbala-citta-vyakti*) and an offender (*aparādhī-vyakti*)?

Answer—One with a weak heart, and an offender, are not in the same category, although in time weakness of heart can degrade into offense. One with a weak heart abhors sins, material desires, and offenses. A weak-hearted person is aware that sins and offenses are *anyāya-pūrṇa* (wrong); however, he is unable to completely avoid them. On the other hand, an offensive person does not consider sins and offenses to be harmful or unjust. He thinks that whatever he does or thinks is correct, and that saintly persons (*sādhus*) have a faulty understanding. When one with a weak heart stops trying to fulfill and relish material desires, and instead feels repugnance and tries to give them up, it should be understood that he is receiving the mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa. As long as such repugnance

does not arise, one is being deprived of that mercy.

Question 125—Who is a beloved devotee of Lord Hari (*hari-jana*)?

Answer—Nowadays, the word *hari-jana* is being misused. In fact, *hari-jana* are the transcendental devotees of Bhagavān who have become situated in their eternal nature or constitutional position (*svarūpa*). Such devotees may take birth in any type of family, and may externally hold any social position or credentials, but if they take shelter at the lotus feet of a bona fide spiritual master and engage in devotional service to Lord Hari, they should be considered as *hari-jana*. None of their activities are motivated by material desires (*kāmanā*); they only want to serve Lord Hari. According to scriptures, it is inappropriate (*anucita*) to consider non-devotees, who have no knowledge of their constitutional nature, as *hari-jana* (*svarūpa-siddha* transcendental devotees of Bhagavān). By constitutional position, all living entities are eternally *hari-jana* (servants of Lord Hari), but one cannot realize this when bound by the illusory potency (*māyā*). When one's eternal nature (*svarūpa*) has been revealed and one is rendering *hari-sevā*, one may properly be called *hari-jana*. [There is no objection to addressing someone as *hari-jana* if his eternal nature has been revealed and he is rendering *hari-sevā*.] Rice is located in paddy, but paddy is not rice; when the husk of paddy is removed, rice is obtained. Similarly, every living entity is actually *hari-dāsa* or *hari-jana*, but only when he is engaged in serving Lord Hari can he be properly considered as *hari-jana*.

Question 126—Some people say that everyone is equally identical; is this correct?

Answer—How can these be the same: *sat* and *asat* [eternal truth and temporary knowledge, cause and effect, subtle spirit and gross matter, higher species and lower species], devotees (*bhakta*) and nondevotees (*abhakta*); sinful (*pāpī*) and virtuous (*puṇyavāna*); educated (*śikṣita*)

and uneducated (*aśikṣita*); demigods (*devatā*) and the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*Bhagavān*); chaste women (*satī*) and unchaste women (*asatī*); religion (*dharma*) and irreligion (*adharma*); light (*prakāśa*) and darkness (*aṇḍhakāra*); constitutional function of the soul (*ātma-dharma*) and activities related to the body and mind (*anātma-dharma*); devotional service (*bhakti*) and nondevotional activities (*abhakti*)? Things may seem to be the same to those who have no knowledge of the Absolute Truth or Bhagavān, who dwells in the heart (*āntarika-vastu*). Such persons cannot comprehend extremely subtle spiritual principles. A naive child might not understand why others cannot see meaning in crooked or squiggly lines that he has scribbled. If one is able to understand the writing of a wise person, there must be meaning in what he has written. Someone who points out the difference between the meaningless words of an ignorant child and the meaningful words of a wise person may be accused by a foolish person of prejudice (*sāmpradāyikatā*) or favoritism (*pakṣapāta*). If we speak the truth to those who are not knowledgeable in philosophical conclusions (*a-tattva-jñā*); who have no realization of philosophical conclusions (*vāstavika-siddhāntas*); and who are unaware of the deep meaning of *hari-kathā*, they may say that it is prejudice. They consider the refutation of unauthorized statements (*asat-siddhānta*) to be blasphemy (*nindā*). They believe that since we cannot be certain of the ultimate truth, it is only fair to treat everyone equally. In this way, everyone will be happy with us, and no one will feel insulted or alienated. However, truth (*satya*) and untruth (*asatya*), and devotional service (*bhakti*) and nondevotional activities (*abhakti*), can never be the same. Those who have no devotion; those who think that there is no need to perform devotional service to Bhagavān; those who have no interest in auspiciousness of the soul (*ātma-kalyāṇa*); and those who are eager to enjoy sense gratification and prestige (*pratiṣṭhā*) cannot discriminate between devotional service and worldly activity.

Question 127—How should we see or perceive a spiritual master, who is a pure devotee?

Answer—Ordinary people see a spiritual master in one way, and advanced and intimate devotees see him in another way. Advanced (*antaraṅga*) or pure (*śuddha*) devotees regard a spiritual master or *guru* to be: their dearest friend (*parama-ātmīya*); a beloved (*parama-priya*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa; a source of love; their object of eternal worship and service (*nitya-sevya*); their very life (*jīvana-svarūpa*); and their everything or all-in-all (*sarvasva*). Śrī Gurudeva is the most beloved of Kṛṣṇa, and he is non-different from Him. There is no chance whatsoever of becoming a servant of Kṛṣṇa without first becoming a servant of Śrī Gurudeva. Only those who serve their spiritual master are pure devotees or Vaiṣṇavas.

Those dominated by the tendency to sin cannot have *darśana* of Gurudeva. [One cannot have a true vision of Gurudeva through sinful eyes.] *Manuṣya-darśana* is not *guru-darśana*. [Seeing or regarding the spiritual master to be an ordinary human being is not a true vision of Gurudeva (*guru-darśana*).] A spiritual master is not an ordinary human being; one who sees him as such is on the way to hell. A *guru* is not *laghu* (light-weight) and he is not human; he is simultaneously an expansion of the Supreme Lord, and His beloved devotee. He is a great personality (*mahā-puruṣa*), a great authority (*mahājana*), one who teaches and preaches the glories of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa by example (*nāmācārya*), and one who is dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa and His beloved eternal associates (*kṛṣṇa-preṣṭha-priya*).

Question 128—Why do our obstacles persist, and why do our desires remain unfulfilled?

Answer—Although Śrī Gurudeva is nondifferent from Bhagavān, we regard him to be an ordinary mortal, and as a result we see defects in him. Therefore, we are unable to dedicate ourselves without duplicity to his lotus feet. We are transgressing the words of the *Vedas* (*veda-*

vākya), the words of Bhagavān, and the instructions of *Bhagavad-gītā*. In other words, not believing in them, we regard the spiritual master to be an ordinary human being; we regard Vaiṣṇavas to belong to a particular class; and we regard the Deity of Bhagavān to be made of stone, wood, or clay. This is why we are experiencing a spiritual decline.

Question 129—What is the duty of a living entity?

Answer—Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa is Cupid (*kāmadeva*); He is the only eternal object of service (*nitya-sevya*) for everyone. His service alone is the eternal constitutional service (*nitya-dharma*) or duty of a living entity. Having forgotten Bhagavān, a living entity thinks that he is Khudā or God. Then, with the false conception of *aham brahmāsmi*, he becomes an impersonalist mental speculator (*nirviśeṣa-jñānī*). Sometimes he is a sense gratifier, busy in following *varṇa-āśrama dharma*, and sometimes his main activity is entertaining women. That is why scriptures say, "O living entities! Abandon false pride (*dambha*), worship of women (*strī-pūjā*), and pursuit of women (*straiṇa-bhāva*). Aspire to be a servant of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and an assistant (*kiṅkarī*) of Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī. Always serve Lord Kṛṣṇa under the guidance of the Vraja *gopīs*."

Question 130—Why do worldly worries come when we chant the holy name?

Answer—If one chants the holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa under the guidance of Gurudeva, one achieves auspiciousness. Even if worldly worries arise while chanting *śrī-nāma*, one should not waiver in one's vow to chant. As one continues to chant, worldly concerns will gradually go away. Do not try to eliminate such worries by your own mental effort because the results of chanting will not manifest until one is actually chanting the holy name. Worldly worries cannot go away unless one chants the

holy name. When one develops great love for the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, one's absorption in worldly worries will decline. How will worldly worries be eliminated unless one has great eagerness for *kṛṣṇa-nāma*? Only if one serves *śrī-nāma* by body (*kāya*), mind (*mana*), and words (*vākya*) will *śrī-nāmī* reveal His most auspicious nature (*parama-maṅgala-svarūpa*).

Question 131—How can we easily attain Bhagavān?

Answer—One can get devotion to Bhagavān only by associating with devotees who serve Him. Devotees have made serving Bhagavān the essence of their life. Bhagavān's name, form, qualities, and pastimes are their only wealth; therefore, they always discuss these topics. One attains auspiciousness only by serving those who serve Bhagavān solely for His satisfaction. Devotees do not pretend to serve Bhagavān in an attempt to derive their own happiness. They do not seek worldly happiness while living on Earth (*ihakālika-sukha*), happiness in Heaven (*parakālika-sukha*) after death, happiness related to material body and home, or even the happiness of liberation. They always serve Bhagavān within their heart with ecstatic devotion (*bhāva*). No obstacle can diminish their desire to serve Him; even if a great obstacle arises, devotees continue their service. They always feel love for Bhagavān and His devotees; they do not have such love for their wives, sons, daughters, home, relatives, brothers, sisters, or even their own bodies. Devotees surrender only to Bhagavān; He alone is the essence of their lives. Bhagavān is the essence of everything, and through love His devotees are part of that essence. [While Bhagavān is the essence of all things, He has made devotees His own essence, as He is bound by their love for Him.] One can easily attain Bhagavān by serving the scripture *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (*grantha-bhāgavata*) and pure devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*bhakta-bhāgavata*).

It is said in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

***naṣṭa-prāyeṣv abhadreṣu nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā
bhagavaty uttama-śloke bhaktir bhavati naiṣṭhikī***

Meaning—By constantly serving *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* through hearing and singing, all kinds of unwanted habits (*anarthas*) are destroyed and one develops unflinching (*naiṣṭhikī*) devotion for *uttama-śloka* Bhagavān, the all-good Supreme Personality of Godhead who is glorified by choice *ślokas*.

Question 132—Is it auspicious to donate money to construct temples?

Answer—There are no words to describe how glorious and auspicious it is to serve the spiritual master and devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and build temples for Bhagavān, instead of spending a great deal of money building a house for one's sense gratification. Doing so is wise and highly commendable, and it brings great auspiciousness.

Question 133—Who is Śrī Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī Prabhu?

Answer—Śrī Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī was a servant of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu who had the mood of being a follower of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī (Śrī Rūpānuga). He was a servant of Svarūpa Dāmodara and Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī; in other words, he was a servant of the servant of Mahāprabhu. He was also a beloved servant of Śrī Rādhā Govinda under the guidance of Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī. Although Śrī Raghunātha Dāsa had the mood of being Caitanya Dāsa, his mood (*abhimāna*) of being a servant of Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara and Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī was even stronger. Has anyone described the service of Śrī Vārṣabhānavī, Śrīmatī Rādhikā, in such an extensive manner? No one has described it as elaborately as he did.

Question 134—What should be the mood of a householder?

Answer—A householder devotee should remember

that the house in which he lives does not belong to him, but to Kṛṣṇa. He is actually like a pet dog in that house. ***Bhāla-manda nāhi jāni sevā mātra kari, tomāra saṁsāre āmi viṣaya praharī***—“O Lord! I do not know what is good or bad; I am only Your servant. I am only a steward of Your wealth in this world.” [A householder devotee looks after and guards Kṛṣṇa’s wealth 24-hours-a-day. He maintains His property and protects it from thieves.] One should know that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the true owner of one’s house, and thus one should serve Him in all respects. Materialistic householders (*gr̥ha-vrata*) make their home the center of their life. [Note: in a country oil-mill, a bull bound by a yoke walks in a circle around two large grinding stones, grinding oil seeds into oil. Materialistic householders are compared to such hard-working bulls which go in circles around a central point.] Whatever they do is for their home, wife, son, or daughter. They do not have a mood of reverence and worship towards Śrī Bhagavān and Śrī Guru. They regard spiritual masters as ordinary persons, and Deities as mundane objects. Only those who give up attachment to their home, sacrifice everything for the service of Kṛṣṇa, and become a servant of a spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa can truly chant the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa. [Without relinquishing attachment to material possessions; without dedicating oneself completely to the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa; and without becoming a servant of Śrī Guru and Kṛṣṇa, one cannot chant the name of Kṛṣṇa properly.]

Question 135—Where should we put our faith?

Answer—We should give up attachment to all worldly things and have complete faith in the words of Gurudeva. Without his grace, our *anarthas* will not go away and we cannot achieve auspiciousness. We should understand that Śrī Gurudeva is the only means of attaining Bhagavān; thus, he is our only eternal friend. The word *śraddhā* means to have full confidence in the words of Sri Gurudev. We have got no reliance in the words of

the so-called gurus or religious reformers or pretenders. Inauspiciousness goes away only by association with a bona fide spiritual master and devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and as a result one will obtain pure devotion, or *śuddha-bhakti*. Therefore, we should have implicit reliance in Sri Gurudeb in order to approach and serve the Absolute Person.

A sadhu is he who will relieve me from all puzzling doubts. A sadhu will give me the highest good. I should make friends with such a real Guru who is really wishing my highest good. If perchance we meet a real Guru, then we must be saved and must be able to reach our goal. He will always supply and enrich us with transcendental knowledge and service.

Question 136—What is the difference between following and imitating?

Answer—*Ānugatya*, following in one's footsteps under proper guidance, and *toṣāmoda* (*cāpalūsī*, flattery), are not the same. Similarly, *anusaraṇa*, following in one's footsteps with proper guidance, and *anukaraṇa*, imitation, are not the same. Many people confuse *anukaraṇa* with *anusaraṇa*. To dress as Nārada and act like him in a play is *anukaraṇa*. To actually follow the path of devotional service as shown by Śrī Nāradaḥ is *anusaraṇa*. *Anukaraṇa* means to artificially copy or mimic, while *anusaraṇa* means to follow the behavior and teachings of great personalities. [To imitate in an artificial manner is called 'imitation' (*anukaraṇa*)," and to follow the path shown by great personalities is called 'emulation' (*anusaraṇa*)."]

We may think that we are following the *mahājanas*, but in fact we are imitating them. *Anusaraṇa* is about proper conduct (*ācaraṇa*), and *anukaraṇa* is like its perverted reflection (*vikṛta-pratiphalana*). Externally, *anukaraṇa* and *anusaraṇa* may appear identical, just as imitation gold (chemical gold) and pure gold look the same. Another meaning of *anukaraṇa* is hypocrisy. There is a tendency in our mind called *vipralipsā* which makes us imitate *sādhus* in order to cheat others and obtain prestige

(*pratiṣṭhā*). Imitation of *śrauta-patha*, the path of submissive aural reception, does not lead to *anusaraṇa*. If one does not ‘follow in the footsteps’ and instead merely imitates, one gets no spiritual benefit.

Question 137—The name of Bhagavān and narrations of His pastimes are of the nature of Vaikuṇṭha. How can we attain them (holy name and narrations) while living in this world?

Answer—Bhagavān's holy name, *nāma*, mercifully manifests in this world from His abode. The Deity form of the Lord (*arcāvatāra* or *śrī vigraha*), the holy name of Bhagavān (*Śrī Nāmāvatāra*), and the spiritual master (*Śrī Gurudeva-avatāra*) are non-different, and all manifest here along with Bhagavān's pastimes. *Śrī Arcāvatāra* and *Śrī Nāmāvatāra* are *viṣaya-jātīya* Bhagavān, and *Śrī Gurudeva-avatāra* is *āśraya-jātīya* Bhagavān. By taking shelter of *Śrī Gurudeva* or *Ācārya*, we can attain Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Enjoyer (*viṣaya-vigraha*). A special consideration is that *Śrīmatī Rādhikājī* is the shelter of loving devotional service (*āśraya-jātīya-vigraha*); thus, Her transcendental name (*nāma*) and form (*vigraha*) are *āśraya-jātīya bhagavad-vastu*, substances related to the Supreme Lord's pleasure potency. There is no difference between *bhagavan-nāma* (holy name of Bhagavān) and Bhagavān, but there is a difference between names of material objects (*jaḍa-vastu*) and material objects themselves.

Question 138—Jesus Christ is a *jagad-guru* (topmost spiritual master). His teachings are sufficient for our auspiciousness, so why do we need a living *sādhū* (*mahānta-guru*)?

Answer—We accept both *jagad-guru* and *mahānta-guru*. If one only accepts *jagadguru-vāda*, many types of *anarthas* may arise. Someone may now accept Mahātmā Jesus as *jagad-guru* and want to follow in his footsteps, considering a *mahānta-guru* to be unnecessary. However, one should consider how much such a person will be able

to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. The disciplic succession of great spiritual masters (*mahānta-guru-paramparā*) mercifully delivers the instructions of Bhagavān and *jagad-guru ācāryas* to us. Similarly, *mahānta-gurus* bring the stream of the Gaṅgā River of pure devotional service (*śuddha-bhakti*) that is emanating from the lotus feet of Bhagavān and place it in our hands and on our head. If there were no such stream, an ordinary, weak, poor person like me could not climb the Himālaya Mountains and touch it. Moreover, when Himālaya Mountain streams have a blockage, contaminated water from other streams is often accepted as holy water. About two-thousand years ago, Mahātmā Jesus preached many spiritual topics. If his teachings do not come to someone through the medium of a bona fide disciplic succession, and one must try to understand those teachings only from books and written instructions, it is possible that the spiritual principles of Mahātmā Jesus will be misunderstood or misinterpreted. It is even possible that one may come to a conclusion which is opposite to the truth, and this may spread to others.

A *mahānta-guru* is also a *jagad-guru*, and he is also an expansion of past *jagad-gurus*. A *mahānta-guru* becomes a *jagad-guru* through the medium of the disciplic succession, and then he kindly conveys transcendental knowledge to us. Such a *guru* will never cheat or flatter us; he does not want any worldly thing from us. He is devoid of material desires and only propagates spiritual truths.

Question 139—The living entity is the marginal potency (*taṭasthā-śakti*), so he can either render service or engage in sense gratification. The seeds of sense gratification remain within him in the dormant state. Do these seeds (*bhoga-bīja*) or the desire for sense gratification (*bhoga-vāsanā*) remain in the heart of a living entity after he attains perfection?

Answer—No. The scriptures say:

jagat ḍubila, jīvera haila bīja nāśa

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Ādi-līlā 7.27)

[When the five members of the Pañca-tattva saw the entire world drowned in love of Godhead and the seed of material enjoyment in the living entities completely destroyed, they all became exceedingly happy.]

The marginal potency of Bhagavān (*jīva-śakti*) includes in seed form both the potential to give pleasure to Lord Kṛṣṇa and the potential to be averse to Him by seeking sense gratification. With the flow of time, seeds of desire for sense gratification (*vāsanā-bīja*) are watered by the material modes of nature, and this gives trouble to the conditioned living entities day and night as various bondages of sense gratification (*bhoga-bandhana*) in the form of three types of miseries: *ādhi-daivika*, *ādhi-bhautika*, and *ādhyātmika*.

A seed sown in soil is unlikely to germinate if it is later submerged in water. Similarly, all of the seeds of desires for sense gratification, which prevent service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, may be submerged in a flood of love and service to Bhagavān. In this way, those seeds are destroyed, so there is no possibility of them germinating into sprouts of worldly desires.

Question 140—What is the proper way to use wealth?

Answer—We do not engage in pious (*sat-karma*) or impious activities (*ku-karma*). We carry the shoes (*pādukās*) of the devotees of Lord Hari, who are free from the tendency to deceive others. Moreover, we are initiated in the *mantra* '*kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*.' ['One should always chant the holy names of Lord Hari']. The proper use of wealth is for publication of scriptures, preaching *hari-kathā*, and serving Lord Hari, spiritual masters, and Vaiṣṇavas. Such proper use brings everlasting benefits (*akṣaya-phala*).

Question 141—Is criticizing others acceptable, or should we avoid it?

Answer—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* says that one should never criticize or glorify the nature or activities of others. *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata* states '*para-carcakera gati nāhi kona kāle*', which means that one who discusses the character or activities of others can never have an auspicious destination. Those who criticize others end up in hell. We have to purify ourselves by not condemning the nature of others. However, punishment or criticism coming from Śrī Gurudeva is for the benefit of the whole world. We should avoid activities like criticism which will bring us many problems.

Question 142—Is there happiness in this world?

Answer—There is no happiness at all in this world. The material world is full of unpredictable events, so there is constant unrest. Whatever good, bad, and partial purity there is in the material world often creates different types of disturbance. Therefore, the verse *tat te 'nukampā* is given in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. *Śrī Goloka-dhāma* does not have the lack of restraint (*yathecchācāritā*) that is characteristic of this world. There is no other way than to tolerate all problems and obstacles that arise at any given time and place.

Question 143—What is helpful for devotional service?

Answer—The material world, in which the living entities are averse to Bhagavān, is a distressful place of examination for them. Tolerance, humility, and praise of others are very helpful for devotional service.

Question 144—Is it a service to protect the viṣaya (objects of sense gratification or opulences) of Bhagavān?

Answer—Our main goal (*prayojana*) is to serve Bhagavān and devotees. In serving them, we may perform many activities that appear like ordinary acts of a sense gratifier. However, if those activities are done to please

Bhagavān and devotees, they are not opposed to devotional service; rather, they are favorable. It is very important for both householders and *sannyāsīs* to perform devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa in order to become detached from worldly pleasures.

Question 145—What is the duty of the Vaiṣṇavas?

Answer—Regarding the conduct of Vaiṣṇavas, Śrīman Mahāprabhu said that householder Vaiṣṇavas should earn money and the renounced Vaiṣṇavas should collect alms for their livelihood (day to day needs). In this way, carrying out their particular duties, both should engage in devotional service and depend on Bhagavān's mercy for food and shelter. Everyone should depend on Bhagavān for meals and clothes to cover the bodies. All organs function for the health of the body; if one organ neglects the body by refusing to perform its function, the whole body suffers to some degree. Knowing this, those concerned for their well-being should serve their spiritual master and Vaiṣṇavas, show mercy to all living beings, and perform *kṛṣṇa-nāma-kīrtana*.

Question 146—Are *hari-nāma* and Śrī Hari the same?

Answer—*Śrī Hari-nāma* and Bhagavān Śrī Hari are not two separate things; They are the same. *Śrī Nāma*, the holy name, and *nāmī*, the Possessor of the holy name, are nondifferent. By the mercy of Śrī Nāma Prabhu, the divine form, qualities, associates, specialities, and pastimes manifest in the holy name. When this happens, living entities who are bound in the material world become devoid of all thoughts of the illusory (*māyika*) world. They are able to focus on Bhagavān alone, and the restlessness of their material mind is eliminated. We should pray to the holy name for mercy. One should not artificially try to remember the *aṣṭa-kālīya* pastimes (Kṛṣṇa's eternal daily pastimes which take place in eight divisions of the day)

while *anarthas* are present. Proper hearing (*śravaṇa*) only happens through *kīrtana*, and *kīrtana* also provides an opportunity for remembrance (*smaraṇa*). Only in this way is *aṣṭa-kālīna* sevā, continuous devotional service rendered during the eight sections of the day, possible; it cannot be achieved artificially.

Question 147—Are only devotees worthy of worship? Who protects devotees?

Answer—If a wealthy or proud person oppresses a poor devotee, Śrī Nṛsiṃhadeva protects that devotee. Only those who take shelter of devotional service to Bhagavān are worthy of our spiritual respect and worship, regardless of whether they are in a higher or lower class of society. It is an offense to think that Vaiṣṇavas belong to a particular caste or creed.

Question 148—What is the difference between Vaikuṇṭha and the material world?

Answer—The spiritual world of Vaikuṇṭha is like the most radiant admirable star (*bīmba*), and the material world is like a dim reflection (*pratibīmba*) of it. The transcendental senses of the spiritual world do not have the defects and limitations of material senses. Although the various qualities seen in the spiritual world and the qualities seen in the material world have similarities, the material world is nothing but a perverted reflection of the spiritual world. In the dull material world, the places, time factor, and persons have become completely devoid of consciousness due to: (1) objects that give sense pleasure which are agitated or disturbed by the time factor (*kāla-kṣobhya viśayas*), (2) a perverted perception of bliss (*ānanda-bodha*), and (3) various types of scarcities (*abhāva*). [In the inert (material) world, disturbances over time, attraction to fleeting pleasures, and various forms of deficiency pervade, like shadows, space, time, and objects.] The spiritual world (*cinmaya-jagata*) is eternal and devoid of material qualities (*acit-varjita*). It is all-auspicious, full of bliss, full of variety,

and replete with good qualities. It continuously generates pleasure. In the material world, various kinds of insignificance (*heyatā*), uselessness (*anupādeyatā*), and scarcity (*abhāva*) interfere in our ultimate goal (love of Godhead); we all experience this in our day-to-day life.

Question 149—What happens to atheists?

Answer—I believe that Śrī Bhagavān arranges everything for our auspiciousness. Atheists can never achieve prestige in this world. After limited periods of frantic activity, they are ruined by Bhagavān's punishment. As a result of hating Vaiṣṇavas, atheists experience inauspiciousness in both this world and the next.

Question 150—How can one save oneself from lust?

Answer—The desire for one's own happiness is lust (*kāma*). The only duty of a part (*aṁśa*) is to serve the whole. Bhagavān is the complete spiritual substance (*pūrṇa-cid-vastu*), and the living entity is a plenary portion (*aṁśa*) of Him. Thus, the duty of a living entity is to serve Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is the source of all incarnations. Being averse to serving Him plunges us into many types of distress. If we want liberation (*mukṭi*) from such miseries, the only medicine is service to devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who are free from envy. In this world, only *kṛṣṇa-bhaktas* can protect us from *kāma* (lust) that is unfavorable for love (*prema*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa. As long as one has no inclination to serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the transcendental Cupid (*aprākṛta-kāmadeva*), materialistic desires for sense gratification (*prākṛta kāma-vṛtti*) arise in one's heart. Anger arises when there is a partial impediment to fulfilling lusty desires. In our present state, lust is the tendency to please (appease) our diseased material senses. The natural tendency of a devotee—a soul who has become disease-free or free from the clutches of the illusory energy—is to satisfy the senses of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Surrender at His lotus feet and service to Him

eliminate mundane lust and sex desire.

Question 151—Can a doubting soul attain auspiciousness?

Answer—No. One who doubts scriptures and Bhagavān will be ruined. In other words, he will certainly remain in worldly bondage. One should not give up the process of following spiritual guidance (*anusaṇa-paddhati*), only taking up imitation process without approaching a saintly spiritual master. [One should not abandon the process of following spiritual guidance (*anusaṇa-paddhati*) in favor of mere imitation, without approaching a saintly spiritual master.] Since everything is actually for Kṛṣṇa's enjoyment, we should think that we are on a one-way trip to Him with no funds to purchase a return ticket. Those who are unfortunate and do not think in this way develop doubts. Such persons never follow proper conduct such as offering obeisances (*praṇipāta*), asking pertinent questions in a submissive manner (*paripraśna*), and rendering loving service (*sevā*) to the spiritual master and saintly persons.

Question 152—Is Gaurāṅga-deva Kṛṣṇa?

Answer—Since Śrī Gaurasundara is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa, the twelve mellows of devotional service are fully present in Him. The only difference between Them is that Kṛṣṇa experiences *sambhoga-vicāra* (mood of union), while Gaurasundara experiences *vipralambha-vicāra* (mood of separation). Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the worshipable Deity (*sevya-mūrti*), while Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva plays the role of a servant (*sevakā*). Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanyadeva, while being nondifferent from Vrajendra-nandana (son of Śrī Nanda Mahārāja), is the combined form of Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, and is also the embodiment of magnanimity (*audārya-vigraha*). Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita is His devotional potency (*āśraya-jāṭiyaśakti*). We regard the Transcendental Entity—Śrī Gaurasundara—as the Predominating Half in the section of the spiritual world in which magnanimity is

prominent (*audārya-prakoṣṭha*), and we regard His potency—Śrī Gadādhara—as the Predominated Half.

Question 153—Is it necessary to personally serve devotees and Bhagavān with our own hands?

Answer—It is not at all appropriate to delegate to others important devotional services such as worship (*arcana*) of and cooking for Bhagavān. However, in times of severe difficulty or emergency, such an arrangement is acceptable. If we fail to feed Kṛṣṇa due to laziness, and make our goal of life merely eating and staying alive, our faith in serving Bhagavān will certainly decline. It is not appropriate for servants living in a *maṭha* to behave contrary to the principles of the *maṭha* and the spiritual master. ***Dravyam mūlyena śuddhayati***—“Goods are purified by the price paid for them.” This idea is only accepted by physically weak or incompetent people. If physically strong or capable people accept this idea, then this will be indicative of their laziness. All of our activities should only be for serving Kṛṣṇa. Otherwise, our practical life will be full of Godless thoughts and ideas. Only when we begin to love Kṛṣṇa will we develop the desire to cook for and offer food to Him, and then offer that *prasāda* to devotees; otherwise not. One should never be averse to serving devotees.

Question 154—Is it appropriate to offer *prasāda* to forefathers in *śrāddha*?

Answer—On the occasion of *śrāddha*, one provides *mahā-prasāda* to *paralokagata-harināma-parāyaṇa-vyakti* (one who was dedicated to chanting the holy name and who has departed for the next world). It is not intelligent to give *piṇḍa* other than *bhagavat-prasāda*, remnants of Bhagavān. Those who chant *hari-nāma* need not consider the results of their actions (*karma-phala*). [Those who chant the holy name of Lord Hari are not subject to the consequences of their past actions or the cycle of repeated birth and death.] However, it is the duty of the near and

dear ones of a departed soul to offer *bhoga* to Bhagavān on the occasion of *śrāddha*, and to assist that soul in reaching his next destination by offering *prasāda* to him. Our highest duty is to satisfy devotees by providing *prasāda* of Bhagavān to them, and performing *hari-nāma saṅkīrtana*.

Question 155—How can living entities like us, who are bound by the illusory potency (*māyā-baddha*), establish a relationship with Kṛṣṇa, who is beyond *māyā*?

Answer—Although our relationship with Kṛṣṇa seems impossible, the compassionate Śrī Kṛṣṇa can arrange to put Himself under our control. Although the Sun is very large, somehow it is knowable to our senses; this is made possible by the sky element (*bhūta-ākāśa*). Similarly, the spiritual sky (*cid-ākāśa*) of the living entity's devotional service helps him approach Kṛṣṇa and establish a relationship with Him, so that he can serve Kṛṣṇa.

Although the Sun is very large and far away, it can be seen with the help of sunlight. Similarly, it is only through the light of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's grace—that is, by receiving the assistance or shelter of Śrī Gurudeva, the embodiment of Kṛṣṇa's mercy—that we can attain the opportunity to establish a relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Everything is possible by the mercy of Bhagavān.

Question 156—What is the result of chanting the holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāma-bhajana*)?

Answer—When one chants the holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, one becomes attracted to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and one's desire for worldly enjoyment (*karma-phala-bhoga*) and liberation (*mukti*) begins to go away. By the influence of the holy name, all kinds of unwanted habits of, and obstacles for, the living entity are gradually eliminated.

Kṛṣṇa-nāma is Kṛṣṇa Himself. Not just Himself, *nāma* is His original two-handed form (*svayaṁ-rūpa*). Other than *nāma-bhajana*, there is no means of alleviating

our misfortune. Only the bliss of chanting the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-nāmananda*) can save us from seeking material sense gratification (*jaḍa-ānanda*). We are meant for Kṛṣṇa's enjoyment (*kṛṣṇa-bhogya*). Only when Kṛṣṇa becomes pleased with my eternal form (*nitya-svarūpa*) and attracts me will I be enchanted by His form.

Question 157—Was Caṇḍī-dāsa a pure devotee?

Answer—Certainly; this is why Lord Śrī Gaurāṅga-deva listened to his *kīrtanas*. Caṇḍī-dāsa had the conception (*citta-vṛtti*) of being a servant, and a servant always regards himself to be a follower of the beloved devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-preṣṭha-anuga*). Caṇḍī-dāsa and Rāmī exhibited no bad behavior (*nikṛṣṭa-vyavahāra*). Caṇḍī-dāsa was a loving devotee (*premī-bhakta*) who had no trace of desire for personal happiness. People absorbed in mundane sense gratification cannot understand his mood, and thus they commit offense at his feet and go to hell. If one considers Caṇḍī-dāsa according to perceptible consideration of mundane sensuality (*ādhyakṣika-vicāra*), one will not realize that he was a pure devotee (*śuddha-bhakta*). Worldly people cannot recognize the transcendental (*aprākṛta*) Caṇḍī-dāsa.

Transcendental servants in *madhura-rasa* (conjugal mellow) do not have a male body for enjoying material sense gratification. There is a difference of Heaven and Earth between the material body of a woman (*prākṛta-strī-deha*) and the transcendental body of knowledge and bliss (*cidānanda-deha*) that is present in the spiritual world (*aprākṛta-bhakti-rāja*). This is the opinion of Caṇḍī-dāsa, a pure devotee.

Those who read the works of Caṇḍī-dāsa and Vidyā-pati should give up the false ego of being a lord (*prabhutva*) and awaken their relationship with Kṛṣṇa as His servant (*kṛṣṇa-dāśya*). In this way, they will not regard Kṛṣṇa to be an object for their enjoyment. Transcendental knowledge of the Supreme Lord's constitutional position will fully manifest in their heart, and they will be able to

understand the true meaning of the writings of Vidyāpati and Caṇḍī-dāsa about Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Thus, they will not be cheated due to misconceptions regarding Vidyāpati as the paramour of Lakṣmī, or Caṇḍī-dāsa as the paramour of Rāmī.

Question 158—Is it proper for one to apply medical treatments to oneself to cure one's diseases?

Answer—Despite seeing worldly people suffer so much, some people enter into worldly life. Their desire for material happiness is so strong that they do not consider the inevitable suffering that will come. [Unless their hankering for happiness is very strong, they cannot desire to be distressed in this way.] In every lifetime we get a mother and father, but we do not get an opportunity in every lifetime to hear auspicious spiritual teachings and instructions. It is to our benefit to go to a qualified medical practitioner, rather than trying to treat ourselves based on our limited knowledge.

Question 159—Is devotional service (sevā) obligatory?

Answer—It is our duty to continuously serve our spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa. Whatever Kṛṣṇa wants will happen. One should accept whatever intelligence Kṛṣṇa gives. Śrī Vārṣabhānavī Devī Śrīmatī Rādhikājī never abandons service to Kṛṣṇa due to fear of public humiliation.

Question 160—Should we approach Guru and Gaurāṅga with a 'return ticket'?

Answer—Never. Those who go to a *maṭha* with the mentality of a return ticket do not fully want Bhagavān. Would those who are truly attracted to Bhagavān ever want to go back after getting close to Him? When the true ego of being a servant of Bhagavān awakens in one's heart, will one have any tendency to give up direct service to Him and serve *māyā*? Those who have received

transcendental knowledge never approach their worshipable Deity (*iṣṭa-deva*) with the mentality of a return ticket. Those in this world who have attachments other than to Bhagavān, like those with the false ego of being a lord or proprietor and those attached to a child as the object of their pampering (*lālya*) and care (*pālya*), have the illusory or false conception of being a husband, father, son, scholar, fool, or poor person, instead of the true conception of being a servant of the spiritual master (*guru-dāsa*). By regarding themselves to be a servant of a wife, son, or daughter, for example, rather than a servant of Bhagavān, they must experience regret and distress. The scriptures tell us to go to a spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa completely and permanently (*abhi-gamana*), not partly and temporarily (*gamana*). There is no question of returning in *abhi-gamana*. The *Śrutis* state ***tad-vijñānārthaṁ gurum-evābhigacchet***. [In order to obtain knowledge of the Supreme Absolute Reality—Śrī Bhagavān (*bhagavad-vastu*)—the sincere soul must approach a *sad-guru*.] *Abhi-gamana* means to take shelter.

Question 161—What should we talk about with others?

Answer—People have various types of disease; therefore, each should be treated individually. If a disease has not been correctly diagnosed, proper treatment is not possible, and one will not be cured. Inexperienced doctors cannot successfully treat a wide variety of patients, so they provide little benefit. I did not find any interested persons for forty years, but now I am meeting some who want to hear about the divine pastimes. Still, they do not want to give up trust in their worldly knowledge and intellect. Worldly people are seeking popularity; no one wants truth. Those who consider themselves to be preachers of religion want to gain respect by pleasing everyone's mind, not by speaking truth for their welfare. One cannot become popular by speaking and hearing the truth (*satya-kathā*); that is why we do not want sympathy of people who are averse (*bahirmukha*) to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Question 162—Can one serve Bhagavān while alone, as well as with others?

Answer—How can we think of serving with anyone other than those appointed by Bhagavān to serve Him? Those who desire mundane religiosity (*dharma*), economic development (*artha*), sense gratification (*kāma*), or liberation (*mokṣa*) are not His servants, although they may pretend to serve Him. Those who consider Bhagavān to be a means for sense gratification (*indriya-tripti*) are not His servants. How can one serve Him in the association of such persons? Ordinary conditioned living entities cannot develop attachment to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa on their own, or by getting instructions from nondevotees who are attached to family life (*gr̥ha-vrata*) and who are always busy in worldly activities. Scriptures advise us to give up the association of such nondevotees who are averse to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

A saintly person's duty is to remain close to *vāstava-vastu* (Absolute Truth) Bhagavān twenty-four hours a day. Only when one associates with such saintly persons will the propensity to serve Bhagavān awaken. Those who can eliminate all obstacles, difficulties, worldly attachments, and reliance on the material mind and intellect of those who approach them, with the weapon of their instructions, are known as saintly persons (*sādhus*).

How does one get their association? It is through the ears. There is every possibility of getting bad association through the other senses, and we will not get good association through the ears if we are not fully dedicated and if our false ego remains strong.

Question 163—Is chanting the holy name of Lord Hari our only means of deliverance?

Answer—How else can we be delivered? The religious principle of the Age of Kali is *hari-nāma saṅkīrtana*. It is inauspicious for anyone living in a given age to not follow the prescribed religious duties (*yuga-dharma*) of that age. How can we attain auspiciousness if

we abandon *hari-nāma*, the special arrangement made for our welfare by the most auspicious Bhagavān?

Dry logicians and speculative philosophers (*tārkika*) claim that there are alternative means for spiritual welfare. These days it has become the nature of people to imagine that there are such means other than *hari-nāma*. Some people think that those who chant the holy name of Lord Hari are members of a particular religion, group, or sect. They think that hearing and singing the holy name of Lord Hari is not the only way to attain spiritual welfare. They try to understand transcendental subjects with their material senses. In this way, they transgress the orders of Bhagavān. Thus, they represent the group under the influence of *māyā* (*abhakta-sampradāya* or nondevotional sect). To think that it is good to endeavor for lordship (*khudā-giri*) over the Supreme Lord (Khudā) leads to total ruination (*sarva-nāśa*) and inauspiciousness. In this connection, the scriptures state:

***harer nāma harer nāma hare nāmaiva kevalam
kalau nāstyāiva nāstyāiva nāstyāiva gatir anyathā***

In other words, in this Age of Kali there is no means of *ātma-kalyāṇa* (one's spiritual welfare) other than *hari-nāma*.

Question 164—What is the nature of the mercy of *caitya-guru* (spiritual master within the heart) or *antaryāmi* (indwelling Supersoul)?

Answer—*Caitya-guru* bestows the ability to accept, understand, and follow the instructions of the initiating spiritual master (*dīkṣā-guru*) and instructing spiritual master (*śikṣā-guru*). Without the mercy of *caitya-guru* or Supersoul, it is not possible for one to understand the instructions of a *dīkṣā-guru* or *śikṣā-guru*; moreover, one cannot obtain the mercy of such *gurus*, contamination of the heart will not be eliminated, and instructions will not be firmly remembered. Only *caitya-guru* mercifully bestows the qualification to receive the mercy of the *dīkṣā-guru* and *śikṣā-guru*. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu personally bestows

transcendental knowledge (*divya-jñāna*) and pure devotional service (*śuddha-bhakti*) in the form of the *dīkṣā-guru*, and He also protects that *bhakti* by sending the *śikṣā-guru*, who is non-different from the *dīkṣā-guru*. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu personally becomes *caitya-guru* and bestows strength to living entities who are inclined to render devotional service so that they can accept spiritual initiation and instructions.

Question 165—Should we study Vedānta?

Answer—We must diligently study and discuss *Vedānta-śāstra*, but we must not study the commentary compiled by Śaṅkarācārya, called *Śāṅkara-bhāṣya*. We will certainly achieve auspiciousness by studying *Vedānta* with the help of *Śrī Bhāṣya* or *Govinda-bhāṣya*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is a natural, authentic commentary on *Vedānta*. Therefore, we must study *Vedānta* under the guidance of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. In *Vedānta-śāstra*, the glory of Śrī Harināma Prabhu is abundantly sung. ***Anāvṛttiḥ śabdāt, anāvṛttiḥ śabdāt***—only by performing *saṅkīrtana* of the name of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa can one forever stop rebirth in the material world. One should study *Vedānta* and perform *kīrtana* of Hari-nāma Prabhu.

Question 166—What is the difference between the *sannyāsa* (renounced order of life) of the *jñānīs* (mental speculators) and that of the *bhaktas* (devotees)?

Answer—*Sannyāsa* is complete when devotional service to Bhagavān is pure. According to adherents of speculative knowledge (*jñāna-mārga*), *sannyāsa* means giving up service to Parabrahman, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, by contemplating the suicidal and self-destructive teaching *aham brahmāsmi*—“I am *brahma*, the Supreme Absolute.” That is, for them, accepting the renounced order means abandoning service to Bhagavān. However, the real meaning of *sannyāsa* is to continuously serve Him; unfortunate people do not understand this.

Impersonalist (*Māyāvādī*) *sannyāsīs* renounce Śrī Kṛṣṇa's holy name, beautiful form, transcendental qualities, unique eternal associates (*parikara-vaiśiṣṭya*), and pastimes; they regard them to be illusory (*māyika-vastu*). On the other hand, devotees renounce all desires for sense gratification (*bhukti*) and liberation (*mukti*). In their endeavor to renounce sense gratification, *Māyāvādīs* give up devotional service also. However, devotees renounce the desires for sense gratification and liberation, and take shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī Bhakti-devī, the goddess of devotional service. Śruti-devī, the goddess of the Vedic scriptures, worships the toenails of the lotus feet of Śrī Nāma Prabhu. Devotees of Bhagavān do not renounce service to transcendental Śrī Nāma Prabhu; they do not regard Him to be impermanent (*anitya*) and they take shelter at His lotus feet. In other words, they are servants of Śrī Nāma Prabhu who are always inclined and eager to serve Him.

Question 167—How can we attain auspiciousness?

Answer—It is only by taking refuge at the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotees (*kārṣṇas*) that we will attain auspiciousness. One who considers himself to be a doer cannot attain auspiciousness. Association with pure devotees is essential in order for the propensity of the soul to manifest. One will not attain auspiciousness by associating with those who are devotees only in name.

Everything other than service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet is inauspicious. Hankering for mundane religiosity, economic development, women, prestige, and liberation is not counted as devotional service. Everything will be perfect and we will attain auspiciousness only if we serve Lord Kṛṣṇa at every step, with every activity and thought.

Those concerned with their welfare should search for real *sādhus*. If we are lazy, deceitful, or full of material desires, we will be attracted to so-called *sādhus* and *gurus* of the same nature. Real auspiciousness only comes from

taking refuge at the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva, the beloved of Lord Kṛṣṇa who performs *kīrtana*. By good fortune, we can definitely get a bona fide spiritual master (*sad-guru*) by the mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Those of bad character cannot actually recite *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*; only devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*bhakta-bhāgavata*) can truly recite it and perform *hari-kīrtana*. The nectar of narrations of pastimes of Lord Hari (*hari-kathā-amṛta*) cannot emanate from the mouth of a wicked, deceitful hypocrite who is full of non-devotional desires (*anya-abhilāṣa*); whatever such a person says is poison. That is why one should not hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *hari-kathā* from anyone and everyone—doing so leads to inauspiciousness.

We should firmly renounce associating with a person who has rejected a bona fide spiritual master, as well as a person who is averse to serving such a spiritual master; by such association one will be totally ruined. One should hear *hari-kathā* from devotees who are fully dedicated to their spiritual master (*guru-niṣṭha*); in this way one will develop resolute devotion for a spiritual master and the holy name. Moreover, one will have a mood of surrender to Hari and Gurudeva, and will acquire perseverance, strength, and courage. Hearing *hari-kathā* from such selfless *guru-niṣṭha* devotees will allow us to realize that devotion is the only true path to well-being, and then impersonalism (*nirviśeṣa-vāda*), *karma*, *jñāna*, and mysticism (*yoga*) will seem trivial.

One achieves auspiciousness by taking shelter of Lord Kṛṣṇa. If we take shelter of the lotus feet of Bhagavān, it is of no importance whether or not we can read, write, or speak.

Devotees of Bhagavān come to this world to bestow auspiciousness on living entities; they have no other duty. There is no other need for them to descend to this world. Their only duty and mission is to change the course of living entities who lack a devotional attitude toward Lord Kṛṣṇa and make them attentive to Him. Associating with

such pure devotees is indeed auspicious.

Question 168—How can we recognize a *sādhū*?

Answer—We may try to recognize saintly persons, but not understanding their humility and mood of service, we may turn away from them. Are we fit to judge them? By what means can we test a *sādhū*? We should abandon our false ego and approach *sādhūs* with humility and eagerness. We can recognize them only by their mercy, by surrendering and associating with them. There is no other way to recognize a *sādhū*. By sincerely hearing *hari-kathā* from *sādhūs*, all of our difficulties will be overcome, inauspiciousness will vanish, and we will develop great spiritual strength. Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā*:

***tad-viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā
upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ jñāninas-tattva-darśinaḥ***
(*Bhagavad-gītā* 4.34)

We should humbly approach saintly persons well-versed in the principles of Bhagavān, offer obeisances to them, and ask them pertinent questions. If they see that we have a mood of surrender (*śaraṇāgatī*), and that we desire to perform devotional service (*bhajana*), they will instruct us.

Question 169—How should we live our lives?

Answer—Hear *hari-kathā* from pure devotees and view the whole world as meant for Bhagavān's service; by doing so, you will not experience any suffering or miseries.

Engage your mind in thinking about the pastimes of Bhagavān. Listen carefully to what Bhagavān has said. What has He said? Bhagavān has said: "O living entities! Even though you have been non-devotees since time immemorial, the constitutional devotional nature has always been within you. You could have served Me but you did not; on the contrary, you have been seeking service from Me. Forgetting Me, you want to be the Lord. Keep in mind that you are a servant, so you can never be the Lord."

Śrī Hari alone is the Lord of everyone; all are His

servants. Their service is hearing *hari-kathā*. A spiritual master performs *hari-kīrtana*, and a disciple listens to it. The listener must be submissive. One should feel an urge to hear *hari-kathā*. It is an inauspicious day (*dur-dina*) if we do not get an opportunity to hear *hari-kathā*.

You should listen to narrations of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which explains that we have received the human form of life after many lifetimes; it is very rare. Although human life is temporary, it is *paramārtha-prada*, which means that it can bestow the ultimate goal of life, *krṣṇa-prema*. One can attain Bhagavān in this very lifetime by giving up the false ego of feeling independent, and worshipping Him in a mood of surrender without duplicity. Intelligent persons will endeavor, without delay, to attain ultimate auspiciousness before death strikes. All forms of life provide opportunities to eat nice food and engage in sensual enjoyment. However, the ultimate goal (*parama-artha*) of human life—*bhakti* or devotional service—is not available in other forms of life. In whatever species we take birth, even as an animal, there will be sense objects to enjoy. Thus, as humans our activities should lead to auspiciousness (*śreya* or *ātma-kalyāṇa*). Service to Bhagavān is the only source of well-being. We need to understand what service is—it is giving happiness to the object of service, who is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Śrī Hari is the origin of everyone; He is the Lord of everyone; He is the object of worship (*upāsya*) for all. He alone is the object of service (*sevyā*) for all. We all are His servants; serving Him is our religion (*dharma*), activity (*kārya*), and duty (*kartavya*). We have no other duty.

Bhagavān is the complete substance (*pūrṇa-vastu*) and the only object of worship (*upāsya-vastu*) of living entities. We have to take shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva, who is an expansion of Bhagavān, and lovingly serve him. Śrī Gurudeva gives us information about Bhagavān and teaches us how to serve Him. Śrī Gurudeva is our only selfless friend and well-wisher (*parama-ātmīya*) in this world; no one else is like him. We

will achieve auspiciousness if we recognize our spiritual master to be our friend, and lovingly serve him. As we serve him with respect, we will feel that, “I am his servant,” and gradually love will arise for him and for Govinda.

Question 170—From whom should we hear the pastimes of Bhagavān for our auspiciousness?

Answer—We have to hear pastimes about Bhagavān and service to Him from the lotus mouth of *Śrī Guru-pāda-padma*, who serves Him twenty-four hours a day and who can give us His *darśana*. Only in this way will we attain auspiciousness. Then the propensity to serve Bhagavān will awaken in our heart.

Maṭha (monastery) and *mandira* (temple) are always reverberating with *hari-kīrtana*; they are places for rendering unalloyed devotional service (*sevā-āgāra*). They are also institutions that impart immaculate training to others on how to render devotional service (*sevā-śikṣā-āgāra*). Primary importance is placed on *hari-kathā* and devotional service to Lord Hari. We will have to hear *hari-kathā* from *Śrī Guru-pāda-padma*, who is an eternal associate of *Śrī Caitanya-deva*, and from devotees who are dedicated to their spiritual master. We will attain auspiciousness and our pure consciousness will awaken by hearing *hari-kathā* from them, offering them humble obeisances with a mood of self-surrender (*praṇi-pāta*), asking them pertinent questions about spiritual topics (*pari-praśna*), and maintaining a loving mood of servitorship towards them (*sevā-vṛtti*). When pure consciousness of the living entity awakens, he will realize that he is a servant of Bhagavān. Devotees of Bhagavān have *darśana* of Śyāmasundara *Śrī Kṛṣṇa* through eyes of devotion (*bhakti-netras*). We can have *darśana* of Bhagavān in our heart by associating with such saintly persons and receiving their mercy (*kṛpā*). We cannot have *darśana* of Bhagavān with material eyes, but only with eyes of devotion. We will achieve eternal auspiciousness by worshiping *Śrī Kṛṣṇa*. The moment we understand that,

“Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is my Lord; I am His servant,” all of our difficulties will be over, and the door to auspiciousness will open. We have to know for certain that in this world, only Śrī Hari is worthy of worship.

Question 171—How can we know that we are chanting the pure holy name (*śuddha-nāma*)?

Answer—One who has even once uttered the pure holy name cannot have bad character. Such a person has no propensity to act as a spiritual master for control or worship (*guru-giri*). Moreover, he has no desire for wealth (*kanaka*), women (*kāminī*), or prestige (*pratiṣṭhā*). When one merely utters a semblance of the holy name (*nāma-ābhāsa*), one’s sins (*pāpa*), one’s desire to sin (*pāpa-vāsanā*), and one’s ignorance (*avidyā*) are destroyed. If any of these three remain in the heart, one should understand that the pure holy name has never been chanted.

Śrī-nāma is directly Bhagavān. *Śrī-nāma* is *śabda-brahma*, transcendental sound vibration. I cannot regulate *brahma-vastu śrī-nāma*; *Śrī-nāma* can regulate me, show mercy to me, and deliver me. If we are fortunate to know by the mercy of saintly persons and a spiritual master that we are servants of the holy name, there will remain no desire for wealth, women, and prestige in our heart. Only those who have become free from the clutches of these desires can utter the pure holy name. Revelation of *śuddha-nāma* only takes place in pure existence (*śuddha-sattva*, consciousness that is free from the effect of the illusory potency). The holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa is directly Kāma-deva, the Original Transcendental Cupid. *Kāma* (worldly lust) and Kāma-deva cannot both be present together; they are incompatible. [*Kāma* (worldly lust) and Kāma-deva (Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the transcendental Cupid) cannot coexist, as they are inherently incompatible.]

Question 172—How can we eliminate the desire for sense gratification from our heart?

Answer—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* explains that Kṛṣṇa, the benefactor of saintly persons, enters the heart of those who hear His names and qualities as the internal spiritual master (*caitya-guru*), and destroys at the root their material desires and hankerings that are present in their heart.

If one daily and faithfully hears about or glorifies the auspicious pastimes of Bhagavān, Bhagavān very quickly appears in one's heart. If after hearing *hari-nāma* from a bona fide spiritual master (*sadguru*) we continually sing it, all of our material worries and desires will go away, and we will remember Lord Kṛṣṇa all of the time. By the influence of *kīrtana*, we will naturally remember Him. If we hear and sing about Him with a simple heart, we will certainly attain auspiciousness, and all of our worldly problems will disappear.

Question 173—How can we know ourselves?

Answer—We can know ourselves only by the mercy of a holy spiritual master, who is dear to Kṛṣṇa. He can help us know our eternal nature that is full of knowledge and bliss (*cid-ānanda svarūpa*). We should always be in the association of such a saintly person. Only through saintly association can we search for our real self, and can our true nature (*svarūpa*) be revealed. In this way our *prākṛta-abhimāna* or self-conception (*ātma-buddhi*) of being a material body will go away, and the desire for worldly happiness, which is the cause of our ruination, will be eliminated forever. "I am a servant of Bhagavān;" this is the *svarūpa* (nature) of the living entity. While associating with servants of Bhagavān and serving Him in the association of His servants, our *svarūpa* will awaken. Then, there will be no propensity for sense enjoyment (*bhoga-pravṛtti*), which comes from the living entities' perverted nature and desires (*virūpa*).

Question 174—Why are we unable to serve Kṛṣṇa?

Answer—No one can serve Kṛṣṇa without first

serving great personalities. Therefore, it is essential to take shelter at the lotus feet of a spiritual master. ***Mahat-kṛpā binā kona karme bhakti naya, kṛṣṇa-bhakti dūre rahu saṁsāra nahe kṣaya.*** [Unless one is favored by a pure devotee, one cannot attain the platform of devotional service. What to speak of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, one cannot even be relieved from the bondage of material existence.]

Our propensity to serve will fully awaken when we associate with the saintly persons (*sādhus*) who continuously serve Lord Kṛṣṇa. The desire to serve Him cannot awaken without the association of His devotees. Service to Lord Hari is not for our entertainment, and it is only possible through saintly association and mercy. One guided by saintly persons and a spiritual master will have the great fortune of becoming qualified to render devotional service.

One cannot serve unless one has the self-conception (*abhimāna*) of being a servant. *Bhakti* or *sevā* (devotional service) is the *yoga-sūtra* (connecting link) between the *sevyā* (object of service) and *sevaka* (servant). Instead of being servants, we want others to be our servants. In this case, how can we serve? Only a servant can serve.

Fruitive workers or non-devotees think, “I am a doer (*kartā*); I will practice devotion by hearing, having *darśana*, singing, and remembering.” Service is only possible if one gives up the dangerous false ego of being a doer and accepts the true ego of being a servant. When we servants of Bhagavān associate with saintly persons twenty-four hours a day, and serve Bhagavān according to their guidance and instructions, we achieve the auspiciousness of pure devotional service (*śuddha-sevā*). When we fully depend on a spiritual master and Gaurāṅga, rather than on ourself, all difficulties and obstacles in our service will go away, and we will be able to happily serve under the guidance of the spiritual master. We can serve Kṛṣṇa in one of these four relationships: (1) conjugal mood or *madhura-bhāva*; (2) parental mood or *vātsalya-bhāva*; (3)

friendly mood or *sakhya-bhāva*; or (4) mood of servitorship or *dāśya-bhāva*.

Service requires a relationship, and relationship becomes clear through service. These four types of relationship and service also exist with the ordinary people of this world. Lacking knowledge of our eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa, we have developed temporary relationships in this material world.

We are eternal slaves (loving servants) of *guru* and Lord Kṛṣṇa. We are eternal slaves and purchased loving servants of *guru* and Lord Kṛṣṇa—having forgotten this, we are in a miserable state. If by the mercy of *sādhus* and *guru* we remember this, we will experience ease (*suvidhā*) in life, and we will be able to advance in devotional service.

Question 175—In what ways should we be vigilant?

Answer—All objects in this world belong to Bhagavān. Therefore, we will face many problems if we think of them as meant for our enjoyment. Those averse to hearing about the pastimes of Bhagavān will become attached to and entangled in the material world. Thus, those concerned about their well-being should endeavor to hear *hari-kathā* from the mouth of pure, saintly persons.

It is foolishness to think, “I am serving so much; I have done a great deal of service; I am a Vaiṣṇava or devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa.” We should give up such mad thoughts and become meek and humble. We must beg for mercy and make an effort to obtain service. If one gives up serving a spiritual master and devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and pretends to directly serve Lord Kṛṣṇa and chant the holy name, this is like trying to store water in a broken pot with a hole in it; this is hypocrisy. We must be with saintly persons all of the time. Since we are weak, our spiritual life will not survive without saintly association (*sat-saṅga*). If one lacks such continuous good saintly association, many types of foolish, dangerous thoughts will arise, such as thinking that one is or will become the Lord. These foolish thoughts will

put us in trouble.

This material world can be a gateway to hell. Material enjoyment may appear to be worthwhile in the beginning, but in the end it is full of dejection and disappointment. *Mādhava hāma pariṇāma nirāśā*—“O Mādhava! This anticlimactic material world is full of disappointment.”

Question 176—Is the mercy of a spiritual master the mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa?

Answer—Certainly. Kṛṣṇa shows mercy and gives shelter to living entities in the form of a spiritual master.

***kṛṣṇa yadi kṛpā karena kona bhāgyavāne
guru-antaryāmī-rūpe śikhāya āpane
guru kṛṣṇa-rūpa hana śāstrera pramāṇe
guru-rūpe kṛṣṇa kṛpā karena kona bhakta-gaṇe***

The mercy of the spiritual master and the mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa are not separate. Gurudeva does nothing other than devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-bhajana*). Kṛṣṇa does not accept service from anyone other than His beloved devotees. Gurudeva personally offers all the services rendered by himself and his followers to the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Gurudeva, who is worthy of being served all of the time, is not an ordinary living entity of this material universe (*brahmāṇḍa*). He appears in this world by the desire of Kṛṣṇa, and bestows the seed of the creeper of devotion (*bhakti-latā-bīja*) on the fallen living entities to deliver them. He provides the proper intelligence (*su-buddhi*) such that one can serve Bhagavān. We receive the mercy of Kṛṣṇa through the spiritual master alone.

***brahmāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva
guru-kṛṣṇa prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja***

While wandering endlessly in this material existence, fortunate *jīvas*, by the mercy of *guru* and Kṛṣṇa, attain the *bhakti-latā-bīja*, the seed of the creeper of devotion, in the form of Kṛṣṇa *sevā-vāsanā*, the desire to serve Kṛṣṇa.

Question 177—How does a devotee think?

Answer—Devotees of Bhagavān are not distracted by worldly happiness and distress, or comfort and discomfort. In all circumstances they serve Bhagavān with body, mind, and words. In other words, they are always situated in service. Devotees think, “I am a servant of Bhagavān; service to Him is my life and duty. Everything else is material existence (*saṁsāra*) leading to death.”

Devotees are wholeheartedly dedicated to service (*sevā-ātmā*); they cannot tolerate being without it. The devotees who regard the object of service (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) to be their very life and soul are *sevyā-ātmā*. Only *sevyā-ātmā* can become *sevā-ātmā*. *Sevyā* (object of service), *sevaka* (servant), and *sevā* (service) are all tied together in a single thread.

Question 178—What is the primary duty of one who desires Bhagavān?

Answer—The primary duty of one who is truly attracted to Bhagavān is to give up bad association. In order to have saintly association, one must first give up bad association. All desires other than that to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa involve bad association (*duḥ-saṅga*). It is said in the scriptures:

**‘duḥsaṅga’ kahiye—‘kaitava’, ‘ātmā-vañcanā’
kṛṣṇa, kṛṣṇa-bhakti vinu anya kāmanā**

[Cheating oneself and cheating others is called *kaitava*. Associating with those who cheat in this way is called *duḥsaṅga*, bad association. Those who desire things other than Kṛṣṇa’s service are also called *duḥsaṅga*, bad association.]

In other words, all desires besides that to serve and please Lord Kṛṣṇa involve bad association, and they are based on duplicity or self-deception (*ātmā-vañcanā*).

Devotees who are free from duplicity resolutely give up bad association, associate with saintly persons with respect and love, and serve them.

The question may arise as to who is actually a

saintly person. Saintly persons (*sādhus*) spend all of their time chanting *hari-nāma*, listening to *hari-kathā*, and serving Lord Hari; such devotees are pure (*sat*). In contrast, non-devotees (*asādhus*) or *asat* persons pass their days in worldly talks, sense gratification, and the pursuit of bodily comfort. Those practicing devotional service without duplicity (*niṣkapaṭa-sādhakas*) regard sense gratification to be reprehensible, but they accept it to the degree that it is suitable or necessary, and they are eager to associate with and serve saintly persons. In this way, they gradually attain auspiciousness. Accordingly, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* recommends that one should give up bad association and associate with saintly persons.

***tato duḥsaṅgam utsṛjya satsu sajjeta buddhi-mān
santa evāśya chindanti mano-vyāsaṅgam uktibhiḥ***

(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.26.26)

Intelligent people should give up bad association and associate with saintly persons, who will remove their mental attachments with virtuous instructions.

One who is averse to Lord Kṛṣṇa is *asat* (bad and foolish). Thus, we should not closely associate with anyone averse to Bhagavān, even if they are near and dear ones such as friends or relatives. Those averse to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu are averse to Bhagavān (*bhagavad-vimukha*). One is averse to Śrī Caitanyadeva if one has not taken shelter at His lotus feet, and has not accepted His invaluable teachings. Those who are truly inclined to serve Bhagavān (*bhagavad-unmukha*) take shelter of the devotees of Śrī Caitanyadeva, have faith in such devotees, and serve such devotees.

One who wants to be learned (*vidyā-prārthī*) cannot accumulate knowledge unless he takes shelter of a scholar (*vidvāna*); similarly, fortunate, virtuous people seeking Bhagavān must take shelter of the lotus feet of Bhagavān Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva, who has appeared in this Age of Kali, and of His devotees. They cannot remain without such shelter. One can attain Bhagavān only under the guidance of devotees and a spiritual master; therefore, one should

sincerely endeavor to find such guidance.

Question 179—Is the holy abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*dhāma*) everywhere?

Answer—Śrī Viṣṇu resides in the heart of every living entity (*jīva*), as well as in every atom (*parama-aṇu*). Therefore, the holy *dhāma* is everywhere. We can only realize this by the mercy of Gurudeva, who blesses us with revelation in the heart. Then, we will no longer see the material world.

Question 180—What are *anarthas* (unwanted habits)?

Answer—The desire for one's own happiness is an *anartha*, and the desire to satisfy one's own senses is the main obstacle to serving Bhagavān. These selfish desires prevent one from remembering Bhagavān (*bhagavat-smṛti*), and cause non-devotional thoughts to arise in the heart.

Question 181—How can we get the mercy of Bhagavān?

Answer—We must never transgress the instructions and orders of the spiritual master, who serves Lord Hari all of the time. We must always be under his close supervision and guidance (*ānugatya*). Then, we will easily get the mercy of Bhagavān. It is only by the mercy of the spiritual master that the mercy of Kṛṣṇa is attained. If the spiritual master is not pleased, it is impossible for the living entity to attain any auspiciousness.

Question 182—Has Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa Himself appeared in the form of a spiritual master to instruct about devotional service?

Answer—Certainly. It is as if *sac-cid-ānanda* Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is the embodiment of knowledge, bliss, and eternity, is scratching His own body with His own hands. Bhagavān's

hands are His very body. (The hands of Bhagavān are His body itself.) In this way, Bhagavān is serving Himself. Bhagavān appears in the form of a spiritual master to personally educate us about devotional service to Him. In the same way, Śrī Gurudeva is non-different from Bhagavān; both are one body (*eka-deha*). Kṛṣṇa is *sevyā* Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is the object of service, and the spiritual master is *sevaka* Bhagavān, the supreme servitor of Lord Kṛṣṇa. In other words, Kṛṣṇa is *viṣaya* Bhagavān (Supreme Personality of Godhead who receives love and service), and the spiritual master is *āśraya* Bhagavān (Supreme Personality of Godhead who is the shelter or receptacle of love and service). Mukunda is *sevyā* Bhagavān or *viṣaya* Bhagavān, and Śrī Gurudeva, beloved of Lord Mukunda (*mukunda-preṣṭha*), is *sevaka* Bhagavān or *āśraya* Bhagavān. No one is as dear to Bhagavān as Śrī Gurudeva.

Like two lobes of a chick-pea, enjoyer Kṛṣṇa (*viṣaya-jātīya* Kṛṣṇa) and enjoyed Kṛṣṇa (*āśraya-jātīya* Kṛṣṇa) give completeness to the variegated blissful spiritual pastimes (*vilāsa-vaicitrya*). Kṛṣṇa is the complete manifestation (*pūrṇa-pratīti*) of *viṣaya-jātīya* (enjoying) personality, and my Śrī Gurudeva is the complete manifestation of *āśraya-jātīya* (enjoyed or devotional) personality. The two lobes of a chick-pea join to form a complete chick-pea. Similarly, the combined form of *viṣaya-jātīya* Kṛṣṇa (Bhagavān) and *āśraya-jātīya* Kṛṣṇa (Gurudeva) is the complete transcendental form (*svarūpa*) of Kṛṣṇa. In other words, if we accept one but not the other, we are not accepting complete Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *viṣaya-jātīya brahma-vastu*, the spiritual enjoyer of love, and Śrī Gurudeva is *āśraya-jātīya brahma-vastu*, the spiritual receptacle of love who gives enjoyment to Kṛṣṇa. We are tiny, insignificant servants of Bhagavān (*br̥hat*), whereas Śrī Gurudeva, the embodiment of service (*sevā-vigraha*), is the greatest of all. Śrī Guru-pāda-padma, the lotus feet of Śrīla Gurudeva, is very dear to Mukunda (*mukunda-preṣṭha*), and is the best shelter. If we regard Śrī

Gurudeva, the beloved of Lord Kṛṣṇa, to be *āśraya-jātīya* Bhagavān, we will achieve auspiciousness.

Question 183—What is *bhakti*?

Answer—In the non-devotional path (*a-bhakti-mārga*), there is no consideration of service to Kṛṣṇa. In contrast, *bhakti* or devotional service is *kṛṣṇa-anuśīlana*, which means continuous service to Him. When *bhakti* awakens in a living entity, that living entity is called a devotee or *bhakta*.

Bhakti is activities that make Kṛṣṇa happy. It should be totally free from desires other than that to serve Kṛṣṇa. Devotees serve Bhagavān only to give Him happiness. They do not maintain any other desire.

In the beginning, *bhakti* depends on *śraddhā*, or faith. *Śraddhāvān jīva haya bhakti-adhikārī*—a living entity is qualified for *bhakti* when he develops *śraddhā*. *Śraddhā* arises when one hears about the scriptures in the association of saintly persons (*sādhū-saṅga*); in this way, one develops faith in the scriptures. One cannot cultivate *bhakti* without knowledge of one's relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa (*sambandha-jñāna*). Scriptures tell us: ***bhaktiḥ pareśānubhavo viraktir anyatra caiṣa trika eka-kālah***. In other words, as *bhakti* develops, one becomes detached from sense objects, and one gains knowledge about Bhagavān. One cannot renounce sense objects, and cannot realize Bhagavān, unless *bhakti* awakens. In pure devotional service (*śuddha-bhakti*), there is no hankering for mundane religiosity (*dharma*), economic development (*artha*), sense gratification (*kāma*), or liberation (*mokṣa*). *Bhakti* is attained only by associating with devotees.

Question 184—How can one get *bhakti*?

Answer—In order to get *bhakti*, we must practice the main limb of the 64 limbs of *bhakti*, which is taking shelter at the lotus feet of a spiritual master (*śrī-guru-pāda-padma-āśraya*). One cannot become qualified for *bhakti* without doing so, and the nine main limbs of devotional

service (*nava-vidhā-bhakti*), including *kīrtana* and *śravaṇa*, will not yield the ultimate result without doing so. Even if one engages in hearing (*śravaṇa*), glorification (*kīrtana*), and remembrance (*smaraṇa*), unless one takes shelter or surrenders, one will not become qualified for pure devotional service, and one will only accumulate pious merit (*sukṛti*).

By great fortune (*saubhāgya*), one may accept a bona fide spiritual master (*sad-guru*). Only those who offer everything and take shelter of the lotus feet of a spiritual master will receive initiation into *bhakti* (*kṛṣṇa-dīkṣā*) and instruction in *bhakti* (*kṛṣṇa-śikṣā*). One cannot achieve the level of unconditional surrender (*sarvātman-āśrita-pada*) through bargaining or partial give-and-take (*āṁśika-ādāna-pradāna*).

Question 185—What is the path of having an audience with Bhagavān?

Answer—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.9.11) states that the path of aural reception shown by the *Vedas* (*śrutekṣita-patha*) is the path of seeing Bhagavān.

Commentary by Śrīdhara Svāmī: The path of *śrutena śravaṇe ikṣitaḥ* is the path of seeing Bhagavān. *Śrutena śravaṇe ikṣitaḥ* means that one can see and understand the truth about Bhagavān only when one hears His glories from a bona fide spiritual master through the descending process (*avaroha-panthā*).

One can have a vision of Bhagavān in the heart that is purified by the process of hearing.

Commentary of Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura: *ādau guru-mukhe śruta, tat-pare ikṣita*. One must first hear the glories of Bhagavān from a spiritual master, and only then can one realize and see the truth about the Supreme Lord.

The scriptures state:

bhaktera icchāya kṛṣṇera avatāra

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Ādi-līlā 3.111).

[Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa incarnates in this world as per

the desire of the devotees.]

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (3.9.11) states:

***yad-yad-dhiyā ta urugāya vibhāvayanti
tat-tad-vapuḥ praṇayase sad-anugrahāya***

[O Urugāya, my Lord, who possesses unlimited glories, You are so merciful to Your devotees that You manifest Yourself in the particular eternal form of transcendence in which they always think of You.]

Commentary of Śrīdhara Svāmī: Bhagavān manifests in the hearts of devotees in the same form as that which devotees contemplate in their hearts.

Question 186—Who is Śrī Rādhārāṇī?

Answer—Śrī Rādhā is the eternal consort of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the crest jewel of all of His associates in the conjugal mellow. No one is more dear to Kṛṣṇa than Śrī Rādhājī.

She is His equal in every way. Taking two bodies, one as the enjoyer (*āsvādaka*) and the other as the enjoyed (*āsvādīta*), Śrī Kṛṣṇa performs relishable pastimes (*vilāsa*).

***rādhā-kṛṣṇa eka ātmā, dui deha dhari
anyone vilase rasa āsvādana kari***

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi līlā*)

When Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī beholds the unprecedented beauty of Kṛṣṇa, She becomes enchanted. If Her beauty were not greater than His, She would not be able to enchant Kṛṣṇa, who is the enchanter of the whole world (*bhuvana-mohana*). Thus, She is known as *bhuvana-mohana-mohinī*, She who enchants the enchanter of the whole world. Her nature is like the full moon night (*pūrṇimā*) of Kṛṣṇa, who is like the full moon. She is the crest jewel of all of the consorts of Kṛṣṇa, and is the source of all of them. The language of the servant is not lofty enough to fully describe the object of service. However, the object of service is capable of fully describing the spiritual truth of the servant. Therefore, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa-candra can personally tell us the spiritual truth (*tattva*) of Śrīmatī

Rādhārāṇī. Only one other person can explain the truth of Govindānandīnī (Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, who gives pleasure to Lord Kṛṣṇa)—Śrī Gurudeva, who directly serves Vṛṣabhānu-sutā, the daughter of Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja, and Kṛṣṇa. He is a beloved personal associate of Śrī Gaurasundara and he can explain the truth of Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa-candra is the original shelter of all of the mellows (*rasas*) and divine qualities, such as beauty and charm (*śobhā-saundarya*). He is the original principle of shelter (*āśraya-tattva*) of all wealth (*aiśvarya*), all strength (*vīrya*), and all knowledge (*jñāna*). The fully complete Supreme Personality of Godhead (*pūrṇatama-bhagavān*) is the *āśraya* (receptacle of *prema*) and *viśaya* (object of *prema*) of Śrī Rādhājī, so how great She is! Such is beyond the scope of human knowledge, and even beyond the grasp of many liberated personalities. Everyone in the world yearns for, and is enchanted by, the opulence (*aiśvarya*) and human-like sweetness (*mādhurya*) of Madana-mohana Kṛṣṇa, the enchanter of the whole world. This same Kṛṣṇa is enchanted and bewildered by Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Thus, Her greatness cannot be adequately described in words.

Question 187—Who is Śrī Gaurasundara?

Answer—Brajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared in this world in the form of Śrī Gaurāṅga, who is the Absolute Truth in the past, present, and future (*trikāla-satya vāstava-vastu*). Śrī Gaurāṅga is the son of Śrī Jagannātha Miśra, and He gives him bliss. Śrī Jagannātha Miśra serves Him in the role of His father. Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva is the original Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is better than the best. No one is equal to or greater than Him. He is *asamordhva-vastu*. Even *guru-varga* such as father (*pitā*) and mother (*mātā*) serve that Absolute Truth (*asamordhva-para-tattva*) in form of His *gurus* (respectable elders in the mood of parental affection).

Gaurasundara is eternally present as *advaya-*

jñānatattva (nondual Absolute Truth) along with His servants (*sevakas*), dependent devotees (*pālya-varga*), and potencies (*śaktis*). He is eternal substance (*nitya-vastu*), and therefore His servants (*sevakas*, *bhṛtya-varga*), His wards or the personalities under His protection (*pālya-varga*), and His potencies (*śakti-varga*) are also eternal. The word *bhṛtya* refers to His servants. The personalities who lovingly serve Śrī Gaurasundara are counted as His *pālya-varga*, and they are like His children (*pūtra*). Śrī Gaurasundara is like the father (*pitā*) of His *pālya-varga*; He appears in their pure heart and preaches *śrī-nāma-prema*, love for the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa. These are His sons. They are like the personal descendants (*nija-varṇśa*) of Śrī Gaurāṅga, who belong to *acyuta-gotra*—the lineage of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They continue to guard the flow of preaching (*pracāra-dhārā*) of the *nāma-prema* of Śrī Gaurasundara.

Śrī Gaurasundara is non-different from Vrajendranandana Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda Mahārāja. From the perspective of regulated devotional service (*vaidha-vicāra*), Śrī Lakṣmīpriyā-devī and Śrī Viṣṇupriyā-devī are Śrī Gaurāṅga's wives (*kalatra*). However, from the perspective of *bhajana* or spontaneous devotional service, Śrī Gaurāṅga's confidential devotees (*antaraṅga bhakta-gaṇa*) such as Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara, Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita, and Śrī Rāya Rāmānanda are His eternal consorts (*kalatra*) of past, present, and future in the exalted mellow of paramour love (*ujjvala-madhura-rasāśrita trikāla-satyā kalatra*). While Śrī Gaurasundara is non-different from Vrajendranandana, His speciality in that incarnation (*avatāra*) is being in the mood of separation (*vipralambha*). So He is *vipralambha-avatāra*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the embodiment of the mellow of meeting or union (*sambhoga-rasamaya-vigraha*), and Śrī Gaurasundara is the embodiment of the mellow of separation (*vipralambha-rasamaya-vigraha*).

Question 188—How do we worship Śrī Gaura?

Answer—We worship Gaura by following Śrī Gaurasundara's order. This worship is the pinnacle of the mellow of servitorship (*dāśya-rasa*). In the sweet mellow of conjugal love (*madhura-rasa*), Gaura-sundara is in the form of the Divine Couple (*yugala-ākāra*).

Those with many *anarthas* (unwanted desires) cannot approach Kṛṣṇa. In contrast, Śrī Gaurasundara, the personification of munificence (*parama-audārya-maya vighraha*), freed even sense gratifiers like Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, and sinful personalities like Jagāi and Mādhāi, from *anarthas*, and engaged them in worshipping Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Fortunate, saintly persons take shelter of the lotus feet of a bona fide spiritual master (*sad-guru*) and worship Gaura and Kṛṣṇa under his guidance. Śrī Gurudeva is a nondifferent manifestation of Gaura; he is His expansion (*prakāśa-mūrti*). He is *āśraya-jāṭīya bhagavat-tattva*—the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the mood of a devotee. While Śrī Gurudeva is nondifferent from Bhagavān, he is also very dear to Bhagavān (*bhagavat-preṣṭha*) and he is His most beloved (*mukunda-priyatama*). Śrī Gurudeva is *āśraya-vighraha* and *sevaka* Bhagavān; it is wrong and offensive to refer to him as *viśaya-vighraha* or *bhoktā* Bhagavān.

Question 189—Is it necessary in the human form of life to perform devotional service to Hari (*hari-bhajana*)?

Answer—By great fortune we received a human body, which is very rare. It is not certain whether we will be human in our next life; by misfortune we may become a ghost (*bhūta*), *preta*, *piśāca*, animal (*paśu*), bird (*pakṣī*), or insect (*kīṭa*). It is not possible to serve Bhagavān in such species. Therefore, we should not spend the remaining days of this life in nondevotional activities.

Life is evanescent (fleeting). Although human life is temporary, it is capable of providing the topmost

achievement, which is devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*artha-prada* or *bhakti-prada*). As long as we are alive, we should try to achieve the ultimate goal of human life.

One can have the false ego that one is a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, *śūdra*, *brahmacārī*, *grhastha*, *vānaprastha*, or *sannyāsī*. However, an intelligent person does not have such a false ego because we are servants of Bhagavān; we are not part of this material world. To regard one's body to be the real self is being in illusion. Mahāprabhu said:

***jīvera svabhāva kṛṣṇa-dāsa abhimāna
dehe ātma-jñāne ācchādita sei jñāna***

[The original nature of every living entity is to consider himself the eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. But under the influence of *māyā* he thinks himself to be the body, and thus his original consciousness is covered.]

The tongue of one who regards his body to be himself, and regards objects related to his body to be his possessions (*aham-mama-bhāva-kāri*), cannot utter *hari-nāma*. We are averse to Kṛṣṇa; we have forgotten Him and we have fallen into the clutches of *māyā*, the illusory potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa. In such a condition, the only means of attaining auspiciousness (*ātma-kalyāṇa*) is giving up our false ego and taking shelter at the lotus feet of Lord Hari and of a spiritual master.

An elephant considers itself to be an elephant, and a dog considers itself to be a dog. However, a human being should not be like this, and instead should have the true conception (*abhimāna*) of his eternal nature (*svarūpa*). In other words, a human being should have the conception of being a servant of Bhagavān. Mahāprabhu said:

jīvera svarūpa haya kṛṣṇera nitya-dāsa

Meaning—A living entity is by nature an eternal servant (*nitya-dāsa*) of Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Hari is present in every atom, and He is attracting everyone to Him. He can make the foolish give up their foolishness, and the scholars forget their erudition.

Only those who do not hanker for sense gratification; who do not want the prestige of being a great personality; and who do not desire to be praised as a saintly person, will hear about His pastimes. The voice of Lord Kṛṣṇa will not reach the ears of those who aspire for such insignificant things; they should consider that death is certain. ***Adya vā abda-śata ante vā mṛtyur vai prāṇināṁ dhruvaḥ***—in other words, it is certain that a living entity will die, whether it be today or after a hundred years. We are conscious beings. If we do not approach devotees of Bhagavān and listen to their narrations about the divine pastimes of Bhagavān, our ruination is inevitable.

The opportunity to serve Lord Hari comes only in a human birth and not in any other birth. So to achieve auspiciousness, we should give up absorption in topics of the material world, and serve Bhagavān continuously until our last breath. All the people of the world are eager to ruin me. This world is devoid of real friends and well-wishers. Those who are friends, family, and relatives in name only are against devotional service to Bhagavān. Our only means of deliverance is taking shelter of Vaiṣṇavas, who are our best friends and well-wishers. Every human being should simply serve the servants of Bhagavān; there is no need to do any other work. We have no duty other than serving the servants of Bhagavān. Everyone should serve Bhagavān with their knowledge (*vidyā*), intelligence (*buddhi*), scholarship (*pāṇḍitya*), strength (*bala*), wealth (*artha*), and talents (*sāmarthya*). *Tūrṇaṁ yateta*—one should immediately endeavor; delays will only lead to problems.

One who engages in nondevotional activities (*a-vaiṣṇava-dharma*) cannot achieve auspiciousness. In contrast, for those who have taken shelter at the lotus feet of Vaiṣṇavas, auspiciousness is like a gooseberry in their hand. Nondevotees wear a garland of birth and death around their neck. Those dedicated to serving Lord Hari never have to take birth from the womb of a mother. What to speak of Vaiṣṇavas, anyone who gets the opportunity to

behold the lotus feet of a Vaiṣṇava, which are extraordinary (*alaukika*) and special (*asāmānya*), will never have to take birth again.

Question 190—Who can be a spiritual master?

Answer—A devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa who is conversant with *kṛṣṇa-tattva* is a spiritual master. Nondevotees including *karmīs*, *yogīs*, and *nirviśeṣa brahma-jñānīs* cannot be true *gurus*. Only a worshiper of the Personality of Godhead can actually be a *guru*. However, even one who has the true ego of being a servant of Śrī Kṛṣṇa (or a worshiper of Śrī Kṛṣṇa) is not a real *guru* unless he regards himself as a disciple of his own disciple. One who regards oneself as a Vaiṣṇava is not a *guru*; a genuine *guru* never thinks of himself as a Vaiṣṇava or *guru*. That is why our Śrī Gurudeva never used to call himself a *guru*. One who calls himself a Vaiṣṇava is actually a branded nondevotee or *avaiṣṇava*.

The great personalities (*mahājanas*) have sung:

***āmi ta vaiṣṇava, e buddhi haile, amāni nā haba āmi
pratiṣṭhāśā āsi, hṛdaya dūṣibe, haiba nirayagāmī!
tomāra kiṅkara, āpane jāniba, guru abhimāna tyaji
tomāra ucchiṣṭa, pada-jala-reṇu, sadā niṣkapaṭe bhaji
nije śreṣṭha jāni, ucchiṣṭādi dāne, habe abhimāna bhāra
tāi śiṣya taba, thākiyā sarvadā, nā laiba pūjā kāra***

Meaning: “O Gurudeva! If my mind begins to think that I have become a Vaiṣṇava, then I will never become a humble person without desire for respect (*amānī*); the desire for prestige will contaminate my heart, and as a result I will go to hell. Therefore, I will give up the false ego of being a *guru*, and I will always consider myself to be your servant. I will always accept your remnant *prasāda*, your nectarean foot-bath water (*caraṇa-amṛta*), and your foot-dust (*caraṇa-dhulī*). If I regard myself to be great and offer my remnants to others, then I will be crushed under the weight of dangerous false pride. Therefore, I will always identify myself as your disciple, and I will not accept worship from anyone.”

Only a *mahā-bhāgavata*, or topmost devotee, can be a *guru*. Only such a *mahā-bhāgavata*, who sees his spiritual master everywhere, can be a real spiritual master. He can make the insignificant (*laghu*) great (*guru*), and he can transform everyone into a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. It is not possible for one to convert others into devotees unless he is himself a devotee. Therefore, being a spiritual master means being a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. To become a spiritual master, one must always engage all of his senses in the service of Kṛṣṇa. One is not qualified to be a *guru* unless he has strong dedication for his own *guru* (*guru-niṣṭhā*).

Great devotees are more humble than a blade of grass. They regard themselves to be the most insignificant. A real disciple never thinks, “As a disciple, I have served my *guru* for so long. I do not want to be a disciple anymore; now I want to act as *guru*.” Great devotees act as spiritual masters, but they do not maintain the false ego of being a spiritual master.

Question 191—How does one attain perfection (*siddhi*)?

Answer—We will attain perfection when we perform devotional service (*bhajana*) without duplicity (*kapaṭatā*) by surrendering at the lotus feet of a spiritual master (*guru*) and Śrī Gaurāṅga. A deceitful person can never attain perfection. There is no place for hypocrisy on the path of devotional service (*bhakti-patha*). Duplicity is a great hindrance to devotional service. My stomach may not become full if I eat less in order to look civilized (*sabhya*). I will cheat myself if I give inferior steel to a blacksmith. Therefore, one should not do *hari-bhajana* (devotional service to Lord Hari) in a duplicitous manner. We should serve Bhagavān with great simplicity and straightforwardness (*saratā*). The instructions of Bhagavān are the same as the instructions of my Gurudeva; therefore, I will obey those instructions with great simplicity, and only then will I attain perfection.

Question 192—How does a real disciple think?

Answer—A real disciple and genuine devotee of a spiritual master regards his spiritual master to be his very life and his ideal. Serving his spiritual master is his only vow and commitment. He has the same degree of love for his spiritual master and for Lord Kṛṣṇa, but he tends to favor his spiritual master. In other words, his affection leans towards his spiritual master. Genuine disciples are not weak; having been empowered by their spiritual master's mercy, they are very strong. They depend only on the mercy of their spiritual master (*guru-kṛpā*) and on their service to him (*guru-sevā*). Mercy of, and service to, their spiritual master is their real strength. Even if a real disciple has to give up his life, he never deviates from the order of his spiritual master. Even if he must sacrifice his life, he fulfills whatever responsibility his spiritual master has mercifully bestowed upon him. In this way, he gets the mercy of his spiritual master.

Question 193—Is it possible to serve Bhagavān without taking shelter of devotees (*bhaktas*)?

Answer—Never. One cannot take shelter of the lotus feet of Bhagavān unless one first takes shelter of devotees of Bhagavān. We cannot attain Bhagavān without taking shelter and association of devotees. We are fallen living entities; we cannot bring auspiciousness into our lives by our own efforts. As long as we do not take shelter of the lotus feet of devotees who purify even fallen souls, we will not attain auspiciousness. There is no way to attain auspiciousness other than taking association of devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Question 194—What is the nature of spiritual initiation (*dīkṣā*)?

Answer—*Ādau sambandha jñāna*. On the path of devotional service (*bhakti-mārga*), first of all there is a need for *sambandha-jñāna*, knowledge of relationship. Knowledge regarding *sambandha-tattva* includes the

mutual relationship between the Lord, the living entities, and the material energy. The word *sambandha* means connection, relationship, and binding. Living entities are eternally and inseparably connected to the Supreme Lord. Therefore, He is the true object of relationship. The general relationship between living entities and Śrī Bhagavān is one of servant and served, but in the perfectional stage of *bhakti* one becomes established in a specific relationship with the Lord as either a servant, friend, parent, or beloved. Other names for *sambandha-jñāna* are *divya-jñāna* (transcendental knowledge) and *dīkṣā* (spiritual initiation). Only receiving instructions about a *mantra* (sacred incantation) is not *dīkṣā*; *dīkṣā* is the process through which a disciple gradually realizes *divya-jñāna*. Living entities cannot attain auspiciousness by reading hundreds of books on their own or by pretending to engage in devotional service (*bhajana*) according to their own desires. A spiritual master mercifully bestows *divya-jñāna* upon a disciple who is free from duplicity and deceitfulness (*niṣkapaṭa*), and who is dedicated to selfless service (*sevā-parāyaṇa*). Only those who give up their personal independence (*svatantratā*) and act according to the instruction and guidance of their spiritual master are qualified to receive his mercy (*guru-kṛpā*); only they get transcendental knowledge, and only they become blessed (*dhanya*) and successful (*kṛtārtha*).

Question 195—What is our main duty at this time?

Answer—We get sense enjoyment (*viṣayas*) in every type of birth. By becoming an enjoyer (*bhoktā*), we enjoy or suffer the fruits of our good and bad activities (*karma-phala*). There are many types of birth available to enjoy all of the objects of the senses. However, the greatest work is serving Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is not possible to do this in any birth other than human birth. Therefore, we should act immediately and eagerly (*tatparatā*). If we were demigods,

we would not have the opportunity or time to hear *hari-kathā* (narrations of the holy names, form, qualities, and pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and His associates). Therefore, as long as we are alive we should diligently endeavor, with all of our strength, to attain Bhagavān. Living entities have no greater duty than serving Bhagavān.

Question 196—What is the duty of a *brahmacārī* (celibate devotee student)?

Answer—A celibate student under the care of a spiritual master does not enter householder or domestic life (*saṁsāra*). Having seen materialistic persons who have entered the dark, blind well of householder life (*saṁsārī-jana*), they are cautious (*satarka*) right from the start. Some people think, “Who can control me? If I enter householder life, whatever may happen, life will somehow pass in happiness and distress.” Thinking like this, they fall into adversity (*vipatti*).

Only serving Bhagavān is needed; that alone will bring auspiciousness. There is no duty greater than this. Peace exists only in service; happiness exists only in service. Service alone is the *nitya-dharma* (eternal function) of living entities (*jīvas*). If one gives up serving Bhagavān and endeavors to attain personal happiness, one gets distress, sadness, pain, and misery. One attains auspiciousness by entering Lord Kṛṣṇa's *saṁsāra* (family of devotees and devotional service under guidance of a spiritual master), not *māyā-saṁsāra* (householder life created by *māyā*, the illusory energy of Kṛṣṇa which deludes living entities into forgetting the Supreme Lord).

Question 197—What is the nature of worldly (*jāgatika*) peace and conflict?

Answer—Bhagavān is one, but living entities such as human beings (*manuṣyas*) are many. Our interaction (*samparaka*) with the One (Bhagavān) has reduced due to interaction with the many. In the all-conscious spiritual world (*cit-jagat*), all are busy serving the One. There is no

question of peace or lack of peace there. We experience both peace (*śānti*) and anxiety (*aśānti*) due to our thirst for sense gratification (*bhoga-pipāsā*). Temporary absence of sense enjoyment is *aśānti*, and temporary attainment of sense gratification is *śānti*. We are unable to consider that in fact fleeting (*kṣaṇika*) peace is actually the situation (*avasthā*) preceding the situation of unrest or anxiety.

Peace and anxiety, and happiness (*sukha*) and distress (*duḥkha*), are dualities prone to change (*pari-vartana-śīla*). Happiness arises when grief goes away, and grief arises when pleasure goes away. Although many people have already realized that there is sorrow hidden within happiness, they still want to experience whatever sense enjoyment comes to them. Thus, inspired by the desire for sense enjoyment, they sacrifice themselves on the *yūpa-kāṣṭha* of sorrow. [Note: a *yūpa-kāṣṭha* is a wooden device in which a goat's head is inserted for sacrifice.] Such intolerance (*asahiṣṇutā*) and impatience (*dhairya-śūnyatā*) leads to many problems for us; therefore, we need to be tolerant (*sahiṣṇu*) and patient (*dhairya-śīla*). No matter what adversity or danger comes, we should observe great forbearance. Running to a liquor shop after seeing it on the way; endeavoring to get rich after seeing the wealth of rich persons; seeing a beautiful form and trying to enjoy it; seeing someone's erudition (*pāṇḍitya*) and getting excited to be a scholar (*paṇḍita*)—all of these are signs of impatience or restlessness.

Question 198—What are the characteristics (*vaiśiṣṭya*) of narrations (*kathā*) given by a practitioner of devotional service (*sādhaka*) and by a devotee who has attained perfection in devotional service (*siddha*)?

Answer—It is one thing for a person to describe his own experiences and difficulties (*ārti*), and it is an entirely different thing for a person to describe someone else's experiences and difficulties (mood of separation, *viraha*) on their behalf after hearing about them. When a person pleads his own case, he can speak completely sincerely

and accurately; others cannot do so. In this way, *kathā* of a *sādhaka* and *kathā* of a *siddha* have different characteristics.

Question 199—Why did Mahāprabhu chant *gopī gopī*?

Answer—Those with dull material intelligence cannot understand why Bhagavān Śrī Caitanya-deva, the teacher of the whole world, used to chant *gopī*. It is not possible to chant the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa without engaging in *nāma-kīrtana* (loud glorification of the holy names) of the *āśraya-vigraha* (shelter or receptacle of love for Lord Kṛṣṇa). It is not possible to serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is *viśaya-vigraha*, without remaining under guidance of a spiritual master (Śrī Gurudeva), who is *āśraya-vigraha*.

Mahāprabhu enacted this pastime to give this instruction.

***rādhā bhajane yadi matī nāhi bhelā
kṛṣṇa bhajana taba akāraṇa gelā***

If one is not interested in devotional service (*bhajana*) to Rādhājī, one's devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-bhajana*) goes in vain.

Question 200—Is it possible to hear *hari-kathā* with ears that are not dedicated and inclined to devotional service?

Answer—No! The names of Lord Kṛṣṇa, such as 'Hare Kṛṣṇa,' are the predominating Agent, and our ears (*karna*) are the predominated Agent. In other words, Hare Kṛṣṇa *nāma* is the controller (*niyāmaka*) or Lord (*prabhu*), and our ears are controlled (*niyāmya*) or submissive (*vaśya*). It is not possible to engage in *nāma-śravaṇa* (hearing the holy name) or *kīrtana-śravaṇa* (hearing loud glorification of the holy name) in which one's ears are the controller or Lord. One cannot perform *hari-kīrtana* or hear *hari-nāma* with ears that want to enjoy or measure. One serves the object of service (*sevya*) with ears and senses that are inclined to serve (*sevā-unmukha*). When one

pretends to listen with ears that are inclined to enjoy sense gratification (*bhoga-unmukha*), that is an offense (*aparādha*), not service.

Therefore, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī prabhu said:

***ataḥ śrī kṛṣṇa-nāmādi na bhaved grāhyam-indriyaiḥ
sevonmukhe hi jihvādau svayam eva sphuratyadaḥ***

(*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, Pūrva Vibhāga 2.234*)

“The human material senses cannot perceive *śrī harināma* because it is a transcendental sound; it will appear by itself in the pure senses of a *sevonmukhasādhaka* in whose heart the desire to serve Kṛṣṇa has arisen.” [The transcendental nature of the name, form, qualities, and pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa cannot be apprehended through the limited material senses of humans. It is only when the practitioner's senses become purified and devoted towards serving the Lord that the perception of the holy name, form, qualities, and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa begins to manifest in the tongue and other senses of the practitioner.]

Question 201—What is the speciality of *adhokṣaja* and *aprākṛta*?

Answer—Bhagavān can only be experienced by devotional service (*bhakti*); one cannot understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is beyond sense perception (*Adhokṣaja-vastu Bhagavān*), by any other process. One can obtain devotional service only by the mercy of Bhagavān or a devotee (*bhakta*). It is not possible to know Bhagavān without His grace.

***īśvarera kṛpā-leśa haya ta yāhāre
sei ta īśvara tattva jānibāre pāre***

In other words, only one who receives even a little of Bhagavān's mercy can understand Him.

If the Personality of Godhead is ignored, one cannot engage in *bhakti* because He is the indispensable factor of devotional service.

***Anarthopaśamaṁ sākṣād-bhakti-yogam-
adhokṣaje***—these words of scripture reveal that all

unwanted habits (*anarthas*) will go away if one serves Adhokṣaja (Bhagavān). Adhokṣaja is *caturbhujā* (four-armed) [Nārāyaṇa in Vaikuṇṭha], and He destroys the unwanted habits of living entities with His weapons. With Adhokṣaja [Nārāyaṇa], there is consideration of *maryādā* (etiquette or morality); devotees mainly cherish the mood that Adhokṣaja [Nārāyaṇa] is their worshipable Supreme Lord (*īśvara*). [His mood of being the Supreme Lord is very prominent.]

Aprākṛta-vastu (spiritual, completely transcendental substance; Lord Kṛṣṇa in Goloka Vṛndāvana or Vraja) is externally like *prākṛta-vastu* (material substance), but internally it is very different; devotees do not have the perspective that *Aprākṛta-vastu* (Lord Kṛṣṇa in Vraja) is the Supreme Lord (*īśvara-buddhi*). Rather, for them a mood of attachment with affection (*apanatva-buddhi*) is prominent. There is no consideration of *anarthas* (unwanted desires) in *aprākṛta*; *aprākṛta* manifests only when *anarthas* are completely eliminated. *Aprākṛta-vastu* is *dvi-bhujā-muralīdhara*, the two-armed form of Lord Kṛṣṇa holding a flute. He is served only with intimacy (*viśrambha*) and love. [He is not served in a mood of awe and reverence.] From the consideration of *Para*, *Vyūha*, *Vaibhava*, *Antaryāmī*, and *Arcā*, *para-tattva* cannot be anything other than Lord Kṛṣṇa. [Note: Bhagavān's original form is Kṛṣṇa (*para*); His quadruple expansions are called *vyūha*; His pastime incarnations are known as *vaibhava*; His Supersoul manifestation is known as *antaryāmī*; and His Deity form is known as *arcā*.] The word *aprākṛta* is used only for *para-tattva*. The word *adhokṣaja* is used for *vyūha-tattva* and *vaibhava-tattva*. The word *aparokṣa* is used for *antaryāmī-tattva*. The words *parokṣa* and *pratyakṣa* are used for *arcā-tattva*.

Question 202—Is personal conversation or instruction more auspicious?

Answer—Certainly yes. A preacher who can personally provide instructions on a one-on-one basis

gives more benefit to people than a platform speaker. General discussions by a platform speaker cannot solve all problems or bring auspiciousness to everyone. Personal defects are corrected to a greater degree by a coaching class or private tutorial class than by attending general lectures in colleges or schools. Therefore, those who give individual instruction provide more permanent benefit to people.

Question 203—What is pure *kīrtana*?

Answer—*Kīrtana* (oral glorification of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's names, forms, qualities, associates, and pastimes) depends on *śravaṇa* (hearing such transcendental glorification from the mouth of advanced *bhaktas*). Activity leading to sense gratification or appeasement of sensual desires for oneself or others is not *kīrtana* or *bhakti*. *Kīrtana* done for the satisfaction of Bhagavān is pure (*śuddha*) *kīrtana*. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said that *kīrtana* of Śrī Hari (*hari-kīrtana*) is real or cent percent (100%) education. The more *hari-kathā* (narrations about Kṛṣṇa and His associates) we hear, the more auspiciousness (*maṅgala*) we attain.

Question 204—Is the term *bhakti* (devotional service) used exclusively for Bhagavān?

Answer—Bhagavān Viṣṇu is not anyone's order supplier. He is the Lord of even the lords of the order suppliers. Since Viṣṇu is the only object of service (*sevyā*) or Lord of all beings, the word *bhakti* is used for Him only. Although worshipers of demigods use the word *bhakti* to denote worship of them, it is not proper to do so. We worship demigods (*devatās*) when we desire mundane religiosity (*dharma*), economic development (*artha*), sense gratification (*kāma*), and liberation (*mokṣa*). However, when we worship Lord Viṣṇu, we only pay attention to what He wants.

Bhagavān, *bhakti*, and *bhaktas* (devotees) are tied in the same thread. *Bhakti* is the binding thread (*yoga*-

sūtra) which joins Bhagavān with *bhaktas*. Bhagavān is the worshipable Deity (*upāsya*) of *bhaktas*, and *bhaktas* are servants of Bhagavān. Demigods are not Bhagavān; they are living entities who are atomic parts of the Supreme Lord (*jīva-tattva*). In reality, they are servants of the Supreme Lord (*sevaka-tattva*). The scriptures state:

***ekalā īśvara kṛṣṇa āra saba bhṛtya
yāre yaiche nācāya se taiche kare nṛtya***

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Ādi-līlā 5.142)

Kṛṣṇa is the only Lord; everyone else is His servant. One has to dance as per the desire of the Lord.

***harir eva sadārādhyah sarva-deveśvareśvaraḥ
itare brahma-rudrādya nāvajñeyāḥ kadācana
yastu nārāyaṇa deva bahma-rūdrādi-daivataiḥ
samatvenaiva vīkṣeta sa pāṣaṇḍī bhaved dhruvam***

(*Padma-purāṇa*)

Hari alone is always worshipable; He is even the Lord of all lords. Still, one must never disregard demigods. One who thinks that demigods like Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva are equal to Lord Nārāyaṇa certainly becomes an atheist and impostor (*pāṣaṇḍī* or *pākhaṇḍī*).

The scriptures describe *bhakti* as serving Bhagavān Śrī Hari, who is the complete conscious Entity (*pūrṇa-vastu*). These days the word *bhakti* is being misused in various ways, for example in the terms *piṭṛ-bhakti* (dedication to forefathers), *rāja-bhakti* (dedication to a king or ruler), and *guru-bhakti* of *pāṭha-śālā* (dedication to a school teacher). If we do not have correct ideas as to what *bhakti* is and how to attain it, we will experience many problems and worries. Rendering service (*sevā*) to Śrī Hari, who is also known as Hṛṣīkeśa (Lord of all senses), with all of one's senses is known as *bhakti*. The scriptures state:

***sarvopādhi vinirmuktaṁ tat paratvena nirmalam
hṛṣīkeṇa hṛṣīkeśa-sevanaṁ bhaktir ucyate***

(*Nārada-pañcarātra*)

Bhagavān Śrī Gaurāṅga-deva said:

anya-vāñchā, anya-pūjā chāḍi' 'jñāna', 'karma'

**ānukūlye sarvendriye kṛṣṇānuśīlana
ei ‘śuddha-bhakti’—ihā haite ‘premā’ haya
pañcarātre, bhāgavate ei lakṣaṇa kaya**

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 19.168-169)

The characteristics of pure devotional service (*śuddha-bhakti*) are explained in *pañcarātra* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as follows. A pure devotee must not cherish any desire other than that to serve Kṛṣṇa, and he should not worship demigods, demigoddesses, or mundane personalities. He should not cultivate worldly knowledge which is devoid of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and he should not engage in activities other than Kṛṣṇa conscious activities. He must engage all of his purified senses in serving the Lord. This favorable execution of Kṛṣṇa conscious activities is known as *śuddha-bhakti*. Love of Godhead (*prema*) arises from such pure devotional service.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam states:

**mad-guṇa-śruti-mātreṇa mayi sarva-guhāśaye
mano-gatir avicchinnā yathā gaṅgāmbhaso ’mbudhau
lakṣaṇaṁ bhakti-yogasya nirguṇasya hy udāhṛtam
ahaituky avyavahitā yā bhaktiḥ puruṣottame**

(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.29.11-12)

Bhagavān Śrī Hari says, “Just as the water of the Gaṅgā River mixes with the ocean by an uninterrupted flow, the mind of a *sādhaka* becomes attached to Me by an uninterrupted flow just by hearing about My transcendental qualities. That transcendental devotional service is known as *nirguṇa-bhakti* because it is not contaminated by the three modes of material nature. I am Puruṣottama (supreme or most exalted Person). My devotees have causeless or unmotivated devotion for Me that is devoid of the propensity to cheat (*ahaitukī-bhakti*). Their devotion is devoid of desires for *dharma* (mundane religiosity), *artha* (economic development), *kāma* (sense gratification), and *mokṣa* (liberation). In other words, their *bhakti* for Me is unimpeded (*apratihatā* or *nairantaryamayī*).”

Question 205—Who is our Lord or Divine Master?

Answer—At all times we have to remember that Kṛṣṇa alone is our Lord and object of worship (*sevyā*), and we are His servants (*dāsa* or *sevaka*). We cannot attain auspiciousness as long as we are not saved from the misconception (*durbuddhi*) that ‘others should serve me.’

Everyone should regard himself to be fallen and wretched, and should serve residents of a monastery (*maṭha*). We should never forget that serving Lord Kṛṣṇa at all times is our duty; however, there is an even greater necessity to serve a spiritual master and devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*Vaiṣṇavas*).

Question 206—Is it compulsory to engage in *nāma-kīrtana*?

Answer—Certainly. *Param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*—All glories to the congregational chanting of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This is the only worshipable object (*upāsya*) of Gauḍīya Maṭha. One should regard loudly calling out (*uccāraṇa*) the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa to be devotional service (*bhakti*); there is no alternative to this chanting. Bhagavān does not accept anything offered to Him by a person who does not chant one-hundred-thousand holy names of Lord Hari (*hari-nāma*) daily. Every devotee of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa must chant one-hundred-thousand names of Lord Kṛṣṇa daily under guidance of a spiritual master. Otherwise, they will become attached to various objects of sense enjoyment (*viśayas*) and thus incapable of serving Bhagavān. Devotees who have taken shelter of Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha chant one-hundred-thousand holy names of Lord Kṛṣṇa daily. One should remember that one cannot chant *hari-nāma* unless one lovingly serves a spiritual master and follows him sincerely and without duplicity; a spiritual master is Nāmācārya, a preceptor of the Lord’s holy name.

One should chant the holy name of Lord Hari under guidance of a spiritual master and avoid offenses

(*aparādhās*). If one always chants in this way, offenses will gradually go away. There is no means of eliminating our misfortune other than rendering devotional service in the form of *śrī-nāma-bhajana*, chanting the holy name softly to oneself on *tulasī* beads. Unfortunate people are indifferent to *śrī-nāma-kīrtana*, loud glorification of the holy name, which is referred to as *eka-mātra bhajana*, the one and complete devotional service. They pretend to engage in *nāma-bhajana* and recite *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* while avoiding service to a spiritual master and devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇavas). Such people can never attain auspiciousness because they are hypocritical, proud, and deceitful (*dāmbhika*).

Question 207—Is it advisable to touch the feet of a devotee who is in the renounced order of life (*sannyāsī*)?

Answer—Our body is sinful and inclined to engage in sense gratification. Therefore, it is improper (*anucita*) to touch the lotus feet of saintly persons (*sādhus*) or a spiritual master (*guru*) with our hands. If they become unhappy when we place our hands on their lotus feet, this will only lead to inauspiciousness (*amaṅgala*) and even disaster. Devotees in the renounced order of life do not like this at all. Touching the feet of saintly persons and spiritual masters with one's hands has become a disease or a fad (*khyāla*). With keen vision we should try to see to it that our every activity pleases our spiritual master and Lord Kṛṣṇa; only then will we attain auspiciousness. Otherwise, we are cutting off our own foot with an axe or digging our own grave.

Some people, due to the influence (*pravaṇatā*) of ecstatic emotion (*bhāva*) or exultation (*uttejanā*), would touch the feet of a *sannyāsī* like me. I am speaking in the language of my spiritual master to such persons. [People, driven by emotion or inspiration, want to touch the feet of a *sannyāsī* like me. I am addressing them in the language of my spiritual master.] Why would such persons dare to

reach out their hands to receive a *sādhū's* foot-dust? Is it appropriate to display such audacity (*duḥsāhasa*)? What qualification (*yogyatā*) do they have such that they consider themselves worthy of touching the lotus feet of saintly persons? Those attached to household life are not looking to serve or give happiness to *sādhūs* or a spiritual master; it can easily be inferred that when they touch the feet of *sādhūs* or a spiritual master, it is an act of injustice.

If you offer obeisances from a distance, we can also offer obeisances from a distance. If people try to touch a saintly person's feet by force, their mind will be attracted to gross things; this will invite inauspiciousness instead of auspiciousness, and yield results contrary to their welfare. Therefore, everyone who desires auspiciousness must be careful of such offensive activities.

Question 208—What is the duty of a disciple?

Answer—Factually, a spiritual master (*guru*) does not make anyone a disciple (*śiṣya*); he makes everyone a spiritual master. He shows mercy even to the living entities who are inimical to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and averse to spiritual life (*bahir-mukha*), and makes them Kṛṣṇa conscious (*kṛṣṇa-unmukha*). He makes everyone a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He engages everyone in serving Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*) and thus bringing happiness to Him. Everything that a spiritual master does, including giving his audience (*darśana*) and all other activities (*kriyā*), is devotional service (*bhakti*). A spiritual master only sees his own spiritual master (*guru-darśana*) everywhere. Moreover, he sees that everything in this world has a relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sambandha*). He does not see any object as insignificant (*laghu*). He does not regard material objects as paraphernalia meant for his personal sense gratification (*bhogyā*). He does not see the material world (*viśva*) as separate from Lord Kṛṣṇa, but sees Lord Kṛṣṇa and His multifarious potencies acting within the material world. In other words, he has no *viśva-darśana*. For example, a professor of medical science in a medical

college does not create students, but doctors. In this sense, the work of a spiritual master is like that of a professor of medicine.

If devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa do not perform the function of a spiritual master (*guru-gīṛ*), the spiritual lineage or transcendental disciplic succession of Vaiṣṇavas (*vaiṣṇava-varṁśa*) will stop. On the other hand, if they imitate a spiritual master, they become non-devotees (*avaiṣṇavas*). It is improper for one to perform the activities of a spiritual master if one is unqualified (*ayogya*) to do so; that leads to inauspiciousness (*amaṅgala*) and falling from one's position (*adhaḥ-patana*). A spiritual master does not have the self-conception that he is a spiritual master (*guru-abhimāna*); he firmly has the conception of being a servant of Bhagavān. If a so-called *guru* thinks, "I am a spiritual master," the word *guru* becomes *garu*, which in the Bengali language means 'cow' or 'bull' [*u mātrā*, the dependent form of the Devanāgarī vowel, disappears from the first syllable of *guru* which then becomes *garu*]. A bona fide spiritual master serves Bhagavān twenty-four hours a day; he has no duty other than serving Him (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*). Only a devotee who regards serving his spiritual master to be his very life and who is fully dedicated to his spiritual master (*guru-niṣṭha*) is qualified to perform the role of a spiritual master; no one else is qualified to do so.

Question 209—How should we accept objects of material sense gratification (*viśayas*)?

Answer—We should accept objects of material sense gratification according to our requirements. We should not be unrestrained in enjoying sense objects, as this leads to wantonness (*vilāsitā*). On the other hand, we should not torture our body by depriving it of necessary sense objects, which might lead to suicide (*ātma-hatyā*). **[Note:** extremes such as overeating and undereating, oversleeping and undersleeping, and overindulgence and underindulgence should be avoided. If you need four *roṭīs* for your meal, do not eat ten *roṭīs* or two *roṭīs*. Always strike

a perfect balance in sense enjoyment; this is the gist.] We should always lead a lifestyle favorable to cultivation of spiritual activities (*anuśīlana*), especially *hari-kīrtana* (chanting of the names of Lord Hari or Kṛṣṇa). There is no chance that a living entity (*jīva*) will attain auspiciousness (*maṅgala*) without serving *śabda-brahma* (transcendental sound vibration in the form of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the injunctions of the *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads*). *Vedānta* states: *anāvṛtti śabdāt, anāvṛtti śabdāt*—that one can prevent rebirth in this material world by chanting *śabda-brahma*, the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Factually, one can satisfy the senses of Śrī Hari by chanting His names, which leads to everyone's auspiciousness. Sense gratification (*indriya-trpti*) of a conditioned living entity (*baddha-jīva*) does not benefit (*upakāra*) or bring auspiciousness (*maṅgala*) to any particular individual (*vyaṣṭi*) or to society in general (*samaṣṭi*).

We should only protect our body to serve Bhagavān. What benefit can there be if we protect it for the sake of satisfying our senses (*indriya-tarpaṇa*)? That will send us to hell.

We should only accept objects of material sense gratification to the extent that they provide a good opportunity (*suyoga*) to serve Lord Hari. We should not accept any less or more than what is required.

Question 210—What is our eternal duty (*sad-dharma*)?

Answer—Our eternal duty is *bhāgavata-dharma* (science of devotional service to the Supreme Lord proclaimed by *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and practiced by great devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa), *bhakti-dharma* (religious principles of rendering loving devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa), and *bhagavat-sevā-dharma* (serving Bhagavān). Both serving Bhagavān and serving devotees are *sad-dharma*. Anything other than this is *asad-dharma* (religion without substance), *anitya-dharma* (temporary religion),

and *anātmā-dharma* (religion not related to the soul but to inert matter). Devotional service (*bhakti*) to Bhagavān, who is the embodiment of true religion, is indeed *ātmā-dharma* (natural devotional inclination of the soul), *nitya-dharma* (eternal constitutional function of a living entity), and *sanātana-dharma* (natural function of a *jīva*, or spirit soul).

When we realize that everyone is a servant of Bhagavān, we can become *sama-darśī*, one who sees all with equal vision. [We can be free from discriminating between great and subpar persons by recognizing everyone as a servant of Bhagavān.] Serving Bhagavān (*bhagavat-sevā*) is the auspiciousness (*maṅgala*) that one attains by strictly following the path that leads to peace (*śānti-prada patha*).

Bhagavad-bhakti, devotional service to Bhagavān, is *sanātana-dharma*, *nitya-dharma*, *parama-dharma* (ultimate function of the *jīva*), and *ātmā-dharma*. One's life (*jīvana*) is futile without devotional service; any other activities are endeavors for one to become the Lord oneself. On the one hand there is devotional service, and on the other hand there are endeavors to claim lordship (*prabhutva*) over everything, which include *karma* (reward-seeking or pious activities), *jñāna* (knowledge leading to impersonal liberation), *yoga* (developing mystic powers), and *anyābhilāṣa* (desires other than to serve Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa). *Hari-nāma-kīrtana* (loud singing of Lord Hari's holy names) is the epitome (*parākāṣṭhā*) of *bhāgavata-dharma* and *sad-dharma*. There is no medicine for the disease of material existence (*bhava-vyādhī*) other than the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-nāma*).

Question 211—What is *kartā-bhajā*?

Answer—*Kartā-bhajā* is a group professing a philosophy that is outside of a bona fide disciplic succession (*apa-sampradāya*). Its members are not Vaiṣṇavas or *bhaktas* (devotees). They think that *guru* is identical to Kṛṣṇa Himself (*svayam-kṛṣṇa*) and that *guru* is the Supreme Enjoyer (*bhoktā-bhagavān*); therefore, there

is no need to worship Kṛṣṇa. This is their concocted, atheistic philosophy.

While Gurudeva is non-different from Kṛṣṇa, he is not *bhoktā-bhagavān*. Rather, he is *sevaka-bhagavān* (foremost servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa), *āśraya-vigraha* (manifestation of the Lord of whom one must take shelter or the receptacle of love for Kṛṣṇa), and *sevā-vigraha* (embodiment of devotional service). While a spiritual master is Kṛṣṇa Himself, he is also a dearmost devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-preṣṭha*). Kṛṣṇa Himself appears in the world in the form of a spiritual master to instruct us about devotional service to Him. A spiritual master is not *viṣaya-vigraha* (Supreme Personality of Godhead who enjoys the service of devotees) or *śaktimān-tattva* (Supreme Possessor of all Energies); he is Kṛṣṇa's *pūrṇa-śakti* (complete potency) and *āśraya-jātiya brahma-vastu* (Supreme Spiritual Substance who is the receptacle of love of Lord Kṛṣṇa). He is *sevā-vigraha*, *bhakti-vigraha* (embodiment of devotional service), *āśraya-vigraha*, and *sevaka-bhagavān*. He does not have even an iota of desire for sense gratification (*bhoga-buddhi*). Therefore, devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa who are dedicated to their spiritual master (*guru-niṣṭha vaiṣṇava-gaṇa*) serve Lord Kṛṣṇa under his guidance (*ānugatya*); their goal is to render devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*) by being fully dedicated to their spiritual master. They never regard their spiritual master to be Rāsa-vihārī (Lord Kṛṣṇa who plays in the *rāsa* dance), Gopī-nātha (Lord Kṛṣṇa who is controlled by the cowherd damsels or *gopīs*), or Rādhā-nātha (Lord Kṛṣṇa who is controlled by Rādhā-rāṇī).

Question 212—How should we show respect and honor to others?

Answer—Devotees are not inclined to respect and honor anyone unless he or she has a relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sambandha*). They know that Lord Kṛṣṇa is present in every object and living entity as *antaryāmī*, the indwelling Supersoul. Therefore, they give respect and

honor to all living entities including demigods (*devatā*) and humans, regarding them to be servants of Bhagavān (*bhagavat-sevaka*).

Śrīman Mahāprabhu said:

***uttama hañā vaiṣṇava ha'be nirabhimāna
jīve sammāna dibe jāni 'kṛṣṇa'-adhiṣṭhāna***

Hindi translation:

***uttama hokara vaiṣṇava
hoṅge nirabhimāna
jīvoṁ ko sammāna deṅge
jānakara kṛṣṇa ke adhiṣṭhāna***

Although pure devotees are the most exalted in the kingdom of bhakti, they are free from pride. They know that Kṛṣṇa resides in the heart of all living entities, and therefore they give all living entities appropriate respect.

Question 213—Can one be attached to material objects (*viśayas*) after accepting second initiation (*dīkṣā*)?

Answer—Never. *Dīkṣā* means receiving transcendental knowledge (*divya-jñāna*). Śrī Bhagavān is *adhokṣaja-vastu*, the Lord who is beyond the cognition and perception of the material senses, and I am His servant. I do not, and cannot, have any duty other than serving (*sevā*) Bhagavān; this is indeed divine knowledge and real initiation. Where there is lack of this knowledge, there is ignorance; if such knowledge has not been realized, it should be understood that initiation has not actually taken place. In fact, in this case one has a severe misunderstanding of the meaning of *dīkṣā*; one has not truly approached a spiritual master, and instead one is merely saying with false ego, “I have taken initiation from a bona fide spiritual master.” This is the cause of all types of problems and troubles. How can there be absorption (*abhiniveśa*) in sense objects if one has truly received *dīkṣā* and *divya-jñāna*? How can the desire to make materialistic advancement in worldly life arise in the heart? Those who are independent-minded and full of hypocrisy

do not approach a spiritual master; instead of developing transcendental knowledge and their spiritual relationship, they make the meaningless statement: “I have received initiation.” Instead of regarding a spiritual master (Gurudeva) as our preceptor (*guru*) and lord (*īśvara*), we convert him into our disciple or someone to be controlled. We become offenders by regarding him as an ordinary human being. A spiritual master is the object of service (*sevya-vastu*); there is no one more worthy of service (*sevya*) than him. Serving a spiritual master (*guru-sevā*) is superior to serving the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*bhagavat-sevā*). No other *dharma* (duty) is equal to serving a spiritual master. Although we may hear and speak about these topics, our attachment to the body (*deha-āśakti*), attachment to household life (*gr̥ha-āśakti*), and sense of independence (*svatantratā*) is strong. Therefore, we forget *guru-sevā* and remain busy serving ourselves and our household (*gr̥ha-sevā*), regarding that to be more important. Our condition is similar to that of a child who becomes enchanted with sports, and forgets about activities including eating, drinking, writing, and reading. Despite accepting second initiation, our propensity to serve Bhagavān is not awakening. Desire for prestige, desire to collect wealth, and desire to serve our friends and relatives is like a rope through our nose that is pulling us in all four directions. Despite having gotten the good opportunity to serve, we are kicking it away; no doubt we will be disappointed when we understand the poisonous consequences. What else can we do if we do not listen to saintly persons (*sādhus*) and a spiritual master?

Question 214—Is my *dharma* (natural eternal duty) to engage in *karma* (pious activities) and cultivate *jñāna* (knowledge leading to impersonal liberation)?

Answer—No. It is not the goal of living entities to become a *karmī* (one seeking material gain or elevation to the heavenly planets) or *jñānī* (philosophical speculator).

Karma and *jñāna* are not the *dharma* of living entities. Living entities are servants of the Supreme Personality of Godhead; therefore, service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*) is their eternal duty (*nitya-dharma*). *Jīvera svarūpa haya kṛṣṇera nitya-dāsa*. Both *karmīs* and *jñānīs* are selfish; both consider their own happiness. They are not devotees (*bhaktas*) of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but non-devotees. Therefore, fortunate saintly persons do not become *karmīs* or *jñānīs*; they take shelter at the lotus feet of Bhagavān and follow the path of devotional service (*bhakti-patha*).

Question 215—Is *śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana* (congregational chanting of the holy names of Lord Kṛṣṇa) the only means of perfection?

Answer—Certainly. Living entities have no duty other than devotional service to Lord Hari. Unfortunately, people cannot understand this at all. Whether one is a child, old person, young person, woman, man, rich person, poor person, scholar, foolish person, sinful person, or virtuous person, there is no other means of attaining perfection in life. The one and only means of perfection is *śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana*.

Question 216—What is the nature of service (*sevā*) as an object?

Answer—Servants of Lord Śrī Hari say, “O living entities, you should serve Lord Hari; do not do anything else. Do not try to satisfy your own senses in the name of serving Him. Remember that service means satisfying the senses of Lord Kṛṣṇa, not giving happiness to non-devotee relatives, by which you will be cheated. Do not serve a household thinking that this is serving Bhagavān. Take shelter of Bhagavān, and in this way you will not waste too much time serving His illusory potency *māyā*, which will not bring you auspiciousness. If you serve *māyā*, every day you will become more attached to the material world, and you will not attain the lotus feet of Bhagavān. You will attain

Him only when you become desperate to serve Him. Will it be real service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*) if you say *uḍaṭī khīla kṛṣṇāya namaḥ*?” [Note: this phrase refers to the following funny story told by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda. A man's wife asked him to bring some fused rice (*lāja, kha-i, khīla*) because she liked it very much. He put the fused rice in a paper bag and was carrying it when suddenly, due to extreme wind, the fused rice began to fly and scatter everywhere. He realized that he could not stop the loss of the fused rice, so he began to loudly chant *kṛṣṇāya namaḥ* to give onlookers the impression that he was offering all of the fused rice to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Later his son asked, “Father, where is the fused rice? Mother is eagerly waiting for it.” Then the man's secret stood exposed—he had not naturally and willingly offered the fused rice to Lord Kṛṣṇa, but only pretended to do so because the strong wind left him no choice.] If we try to cheat Kṛṣṇa, we ourselves will be cheated. Therefore, I say that you should become alert. Serve Lord Kṛṣṇa even if it means cheating everyone else; only in this way will Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the indwelling Supersoul of all living entities, be happy with you.

Question 217—Is life without devotional service to Lord Hari (*hari-bhajana*) simply a waste?

Answer—Certainly. If I do not serve Lord Kṛṣṇa, there is no need for me to eat or drink anything. If I do not engage in devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-bhajana*) despite having gotten a human birth which is rare even for demigods (*deva-durlabha manuṣya-janma*), I will fall into great misery lifetime after lifetime. ***Kṛṣṇa bhajibāra tare saṁsāre āinu, miche māyāya baddha haye vṛkṣasama hainu.*** In other words: “I came to this world to render devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa. However, due to being bound by the illusory potency (*jhūṭhī-māyā*), I have become like a tree.”

Animals are elevated to the human species of life so that they can engage in devotional service to Lord Hari. If

despite becoming a human being we only engage in animal activities like eating (*āhāra*) and playing (*vihāra*) and we stay busy in family life, or we maintain the same nature of a sense gratifier (*viṣayī*) in the name of devotional service, our life will be wasted. We will not have gotten any benefit from our birth as a human (*manuṣya-janma*).

Question 218—Is *śrī-nāma-saṅkīrtana* the crest jewel of all *sādhana*s (*sādhana-śiromaṇi*)?

Answer—Certainly. In the Age of Kali, *śrī-nāma-saṅkīrtana* (congregational chanting of *śrī-hari-nāma* as demonstrated by Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the other members of *Pañca-tattva*) is the most excellent means of attaining perfection; it is the only means, it is the only means, it is the only means of attaining perfection. In other words, in the Age of Kali, living entities have no means, no means, no means (*sādhana*) of attaining perfection or devotional service (*bhajana*) other than *hari-nāmakīrtana*, glorification of the holy name of the Supreme Lord Hari. One will attain complete perfection (*sarvārtha-siddhi*) through this medium of *śrī-nāma-saṅkīrtana*. The scriptures state:

***harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam
kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatiḥ anyathā
kali-kāle nāma-rūpe kṛṣṇa-avatāra
nāma haite haya sarva-jagat-nistāra
dārdhya lāgi 'harer nāma'-ukti tina-bāra
jaḍa loka bujhāite punaḥ 'eva'-kāra
kevala śabde punarapi niścaya-karaṇa
karma-jñāna-yoga-tapa ādī nivāraṇa
anyathā ye māne tāra nāhika nistāra
nāhi nāhi nāhi—tina ukta eva-kāra***

Meaning: in this iron age of quarrel and hypocrisy (Kali-yuga), the only means of deliverance is chanting the holy name of Lord Hari. There is no other way; there is no other way; there is no other way. In the Age of Kali, Śrī Kṛṣṇa incarnates in the form of His holy name. The whole

world is delivered only by the holy name. This verse repeats *harer nāma* (holy name of Lord Hari) three times for emphasis. It also repeats *eva* (certainly) three times so that the common people of this material world can understand. The word *kevala* (only) encourages conclusiveness and excludes all other processes, such as *jñāna* (knowledge leading to impersonal liberation), *yoga* (developing mystic powers, for example the *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* system of Patañjali), *tapasyā* (asceticism or performing austerities), and *karma* (reward-seeking activities). This verse clearly states that anyone who accepts any other path or thinks otherwise cannot be delivered. This is the reason for the triple repetition of 'nothing else' and *eva* (giving emphasis).

The scriptures also state:

***nāma binā kali-kāle nāhi āra dharma
sarva-mantra-sāra nāma, ei śāstra-marma
bhajanera madhye śreṣṭha nava-vidhā bhakti
'kṛṣṇa-prema', 'kṛṣṇa' dite dhare mahā-śakti
tāra madhye sarva-śreṣṭha nāma-saṅkīrtana
niraparādhe nāma laile pāya prema-dhana***

Meaning: in this Age of Kali there is no religious principle other than the chanting of the holy name. The holy name is the essence of all *mantras*; this is the purport of the scriptures. Among the ways of executing devotional service (*bhakti*), nine prescribed methods (*navadhā-bhakti*) are best; they have great potency to bestow Kṛṣṇa and ecstatic love for Him (*kṛṣṇa-prema*). Of these nine processes of devotional service, the most important is *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, the congregational chanting of *śrī-hari-nāma* as demonstrated by Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the other members of the Pañca-tattva. If one does so while avoiding the ten kinds of offenses, one very easily obtains the wealth of *kṛṣṇa-prema*.

Among the sixty-four limbs of devotional service, *śrī-nāma-saṅkīrtana* is the most excellent. *Nāma-saṅkīrtana* alone brings all auspiciousness (*sarva-maṅgala*). *Nāma-saṅkīrtana* includes within it all of the other nine limbs of

devotional service, including *śravaṇa* (hearing transcendental descriptions of Bhagavān's names, forms, qualities, pastimes, and associates from the mouth of advanced *bhaktas*), *kīrtana* (speaking or singing about the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa), and *smaraṇa* (remembering Śrī Kṛṣṇa). It is the heartfelt desire of Svayaṁ Bhagavān Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva that *śrī-kṛṣṇa-kīrtana* be the only *abhidheya* (devotional practice by which the ultimate goal is achieved).

Those who engage in *nāma-kīrtana* attain auspiciousness in every way. An important consideration is that it is necessary for those who engage in *nāma-kīrtana* to first engage in *śravaṇa*. *Śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana* is indeed the crest jewel of all processes of devotional service (*sādhana-śiromaṇi*). Living entities attain all perfection by engaging in *śrī-nāma-bhajana*, chanting the holy name of Lord Hari. We have no duty other than engaging in *nāma-kīrtana* in the company of saintly persons (*sādhū-saṅga*). The subject matter (*pratipādyaviṣaya*) discussed in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is *śrī-nāma-saṅkīrtana*. There is no duty other than *nāma-saṅkīrtana* for those who have become liberated (*mukta*). Those who chant the *mantra* offer themselves at the lotus feet of Śrī Nāma, the holy name. From the day one attains perfection in chanting the *mantra* (*mantra-siddhi*), *hari-nāma* always dances in one's mouth. One must not neglect serving devotees who reside in a monastery (*maṭha*) and engage in *nāma-kīrtana*; one will not attain auspiciousness by pretending to engage in devotional service (*bhajana*) while neglecting such service to devotees living in a *maṭha*. Attending classes and recitations of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* (*Śrīmad Bhāgavata-pāṭha*) is compulsory for all devotees, both those who are householders (*grhasthas*) and those who reside in a *maṭha* (*maṭha-vāsīs*).

All of the things that are used to serve Hari are present only in a *maṭha*. One becomes qualified to engage in *śrī-nāma-saṅkīrtana* by serving the residents of a *maṭha*; doing so leads to an increase in one's taste

(*ruci*) in *śrī-nāma-bhajana*. If we neglect such service and instead only serve our non-devotee friends and relatives (*bahir-mukha ātmīya svajana*), we will not be able to engage in *hari-nāma*.

If we remain indifferent to serving Lord Hari, Guru (spiritual master), and Vaiṣṇavas, and stay busy serving family members and worldly people (*saṁsāra*), we will never become dedicated to chanting the holy name (*nāma-parāyaṇa*). It was only to make us *nāma-pārāyaṇa* that Gaurāṅgadeva, who is the combined form (*milita-tanu*) of Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, came to this world. If we remain indifferent to serving the holy name (*śrī-nāma*) by not listening to His words, we will never attain auspiciousness.

Śrī-nāma-saṅkīrtana is the best means of attaining Lord Kṛṣṇa. If other practices for attaining perfection (*sādhana*s) are helpful in *kṛṣṇa-nāma saṅkīrtana*, only then are they worthy of being called *sādhana*s; otherwise, they should be considered as obstacles.

Śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana is the king of all *sādhana*s (*sādhana-samrāṭa*); it is the infallible means of attaining all perfection (*sarva-siddhi*). In *Śikṣāṣṭaka* (eight verses glorifying the chanting of the Lord's holy name), Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu does not give instructions for Deity worship (*arcana*); rather, He gives instructions (*śikṣā*) about *śrī-nāma-bhajana*. Even if one follows the other limbs of devotional service, according to regulative principles (*vidhī*) one must also engage in *śrī-nāma-saṅkīrtana*. ***Yadyapi anyā-bhakti kalau kartavyā tadā kīrtanākhyā-bhakti-saṁyogenaiva kartavyā*** [*Bhakti-saṅdarbha* (173), Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī]. In Kali-yuga, one must execute the other limbs of devotional service in conjunction with *kīrtanākhyā-bhakti*, devotional service characterized by *kīrtana* or loud glorification of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa and *kṛṣṇa-nāma* are not separate things. Kṛṣṇa Himself is the holy name (*nāma*), and the holy name (*nāma*) is Kṛṣṇa; They are non-different. *Kṛṣṇa-nāma* Himself is Nanda-nandana (Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa who is

the darling son of Nanda Mahārāja) and Śyāma-sundara. Thus, *kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana* is our only devotional practice (*abhidheya*) and duty (*kartavya*). We will attain auspiciousness only when we think like this.

Question 219—What is *śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana*?

Answer—Śrī Kṛṣṇa + *saṅkīrtana* = *śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa = Śrī + Kṛṣṇa. Śrī means Lakṣmī or Śrīmatī Gāndharvā (Śrīmatī Rādhikājī), who is the source (*aṁśinī*) of all Lakṣmīs (goddesses of fortune). When we address Bhagavān as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, we understand that He is Girivara-dhārī Brajendra-nandana, Śrī Kṛṣṇa who lifts Govardhana Mountain on the tip of His little finger on His left hand and who is the son of Śrī Nanda Mahārāja, King of Vraja, along with Gāndharvā (Śrī Rādhājī).

bahubhir milītvā yat saṅkīrtanaṁ tad-eva saṅkīrtanaṁ

Meaning: when people gather and perform *kīrtana* (loud glorification of Lord Kṛṣṇa), that congregational activity is known as *saṅkīrtana*.

Samyak-kīrtana means *saṅkīrtana*. In other words, *saṅkīrtana* is loud glorification of the name (*nāma*), form (*rūpa*), qualities (*guṇa*), eternal associates (*parikara-vaiśiṣṭya*), and pastimes (*līlā*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Question 220—What is the goal of our life (*prayojana*)?

Answer—Kṛṣṇa-candra is the most complete Supreme Absolute Truth (*pūrṇa-tama para-tattva vastu*). He is the object of eternal service (*nitya-sevya*) for all living entities. We are servants (*sevakas*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and Lord Kṛṣṇa is the object of our service (*sevya*). Therefore, service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*) and love of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-prīti*) are our goals. When the function of consciousness (*cetana*) or the soul (*ātmā*) manifests, we can easily understand that Lord Kṛṣṇa alone is the object of service (*sevya-vastu*) and service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*) is our only duty. Otherwise, we will have to die while being absorbed in worldly activities (*saṁsāra*). We will

have to go to hell if we regard the world to be the object of our worship (*upāsya*) or the essence (*sāra*).

We will have to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa through the transcendental senses (*aprākṛta-indriyas*) of the soul; we cannot serve Him on the strength of imagination. We need to have *sambandha-jñāna* (knowledge of relationship) and *divya-jñāna* (transcendental knowledge). Pure devotees (*śuddha-bhaktas*) know that only Lord Kṛṣṇa is their worshipable Deity (*ārādhya*). We must realize that only such pure devotees, and no one else, are our well-wishers. Only after attaining such realization will we attain auspiciousness (*maṅgala*). If we consider others, such as wife (*strī*), son (*pūtra*), or daughter (*kanyā*) to be ours, we should understand that we have not received transcendental knowledge; despite having accepted a *mantra*, we have remained in the darkness.

Kṛṣṇa alone is the object of our worship and our dear friend (*nija-jana*). Kṛṣṇa is our only friend and well-wisher; Vaiṣṇavas know this. This is indeed the goal. It is not appropriate to regard material objects, which in reality do not belong to us (*anātmīya*), and worldly pride full of desire for sense gratification (*bhoga-vāñchā-mayī jaḍa-pratiṣṭhā*) to be our own (*ātmīya*).

One engages in sense gratification (*bhoga*) through the mind (*mana*). Lord Kṛṣṇa is not served by bones and flesh; He is served by consciousness (*cetana*). One serves Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the object of service, by senses that are inclined to serve (*sevā-unmukha indriyas*).

Question 221—What is bliss (*ānanda*)?

Answer—The scriptures say: ***ānandaṁ brahma.bhūmaiva sukham***. Para-brahma Śrī Kṛṣṇa alone is the supreme blissful substance (*ānanda-vastu*). *Pūrṇa-ānanda* is within Him. He is the embodiment of complete bliss (*pūrṇa-ānanda-vigraha*). ***īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ***. [The Supreme Lord, Īśvara, is Kṛṣṇa; His form is eternal, all-knowing, and blissful.]

The scriptures say: ***nālpe sukhamasti***. There is not

even an iota of happiness in an insignificant object (*kṣudra-vastu*). Worldly or material happiness (*jaḍa-ānanda*) is not complete happiness (*pūrṇa-ānanda*); therefore, with *jaḍa-ānanda* desires (*āśā*) never go away. Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is *brhad-vastu* (great substance) or *brahma-vastu* (supreme spiritual substance), is the root of all kinds of happiness (*sukhas*). Living entities (*jīvas*) can attain complete happiness by serving that Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the embodiment of bliss (*ānanda-mūrti*).

Question 222—Is the material world (*jagata*) a place for living entities to enjoy (*bhogyā*)?

Answer—Never. The material world is an instrument (*sevā-upakaraṇa*) to serve Jagadīśvara; it is for His enjoyment. Therefore, one commits an offense if one maintains a mood of enjoyment towards the material world, and as a result one becomes a materialist (*saṁsārī*) and has to burn in the flames of material existence. When we forget our nature and want to enjoy ourselves due to being bound in many different kinds of thoughts, there is a desire to enjoy through the material senses. We should know that the material world made of the five elements earth, water, fire, air, and ether (*prapañca-jagata*) is not an object of our enjoyment. Rather, it is meant exclusively to serve Bhagavān. One should not have a mood of enjoyment (*bhoga-buddhi*) towards something meant for serving Bhagavān.

Question 223—Does the soul (*ātmā*) enjoy?

Answer—The soul is a servant of the Supersoul (Paramātmā). Service to Kṛṣṇa is the constitutional nature (*dharma*) or duty (*kārya*) of the soul. Therefore, how can the soul give up that service (*sevā*) and enjoy sense gratification (*bhoga*)? The soul is not an enjoyer (*bhogī*) who is eager to engage in sense gratification; the soul never becomes absorbed in the activities of sense gratification. Factually, the mind (*mana*) alone acts as an

enjoyer (*bhoktā*). This propensity to enjoy sense gratification (*bhoga-vṛtti*) covers the function or nature (*vṛtti*) of the soul.

Question 224—Who is Bhagavān?

Answer—Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is the embodiment of knowledge, bliss, and eternity (*sac-cid-ānanda vigraha*). He is not impersonal or formless (*nirākāra*). Bhagavān does not have a material body like ours; for Him, there is no difference between *deha* (body) and *dehī* (possessor of the body). His name (*nāma*), form (*rūpa*), qualities (*guṇa*), and pastimes (*līlā*) are non-different (*abhinna*) from Him.

Bhagavān is the fully independent Person (*svatāṭ-vastu*). He does not require any other help. He may come down upon the scene of anybody as He pleases. Bhagavān does not expect help from anyone. He is devoid of material motives (*nirapekṣa*), completely independent (*pūrṇa-svatantra*), and self-effulgent (*sva-prakāśa*). His senses such as eyes and ears are not material and limited, but spiritual or transcendental (*cinmaya*) and complete (*pūrṇa*).

Question 225—What does Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam say?

Answer—Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam does not give instructions (*upadeśa*) about *karma-kāṇḍa* (fruitive activities). Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam only glorifies pastimes of Bhagavān, which will bring complete auspiciousness (*parama-māṅgalya*) to living entities. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam discusses the *parama-dharma* (ultimate function of living entities) of *śuddha-bhakti*, pure devotional service. Thus, we should listen to narrations of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and also read and think about it.

Śuddha-jñāna (pure knowledge), śuddha-virāga (pure renunciation), and śuddha-bhakti (pure devotional service) are based on the same principles (*tātparya*). [The essence of pure knowledge, pure detachment, and pure

devotion is the same.] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* discusses service (*sevā*) to Bhagavān rather than personal sense gratification (*indriya-tṛpti*). Happiness (*sukha*) and distress (*duḥkha*) are two different things. If one keeps on searching for worldly happiness, one only finds distress. Therefore, it is not appropriate to hanker for the results or fruits of one's action; *karma-kāṇḍa* is not the work of liberated personalities (*mukta-puruṣas*). The results of *karma* (reward-seeking activity) are sometimes good and sometimes bad.

If we study books other than *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, we are bound to follow *karma-mārga* (path of fruitive action) or *jñāna-mārga* (path of knowledge leading to impersonal liberation), and we will be forced to accept worldly happiness and distress, and birth (*janma*) and death (*mṛtyu*). One can attain *dharma* (mundane religiosity), *artha* (economic development), and *kāma* (sense gratification) by *karma-kāṇḍa* (pursuit of fruitive activities). Those who desire liberation (*mokṣa-kāṁī*) cannot worship the Supreme Lord (*īśvara*) even if they renounce sense gratification (*bhogas*). Only devotees truly worship Bhagavān.

It is not possible to render devotional service (*bhakti*) to Bhagavān by *yoga* (mysticism), through which one can attain the eighteen mystic perfections (*aṣṭādaśa-siddhis*) such as *aṇimā* (becoming smaller than the smallest) and *laghimā* (becoming lighter than the lightest). Leave aside the talk of liberation of those who seek liberation, because they only want to be free from the pleasures and pains of the world, and even in that there is selfish motive. [We should not associate with those who desire liberation because the mood of enjoyment (*bhoktā-pana*) is present in their desire for freedom from the distress and happiness of material existence.]

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam explains that those who have accepted *karma*, *jñāna*, or *yoga* have taken the wrong path. One easily attains everything by developing the mood of devotional service. Fruitive workers want sense

gratification (*viṣaya-bhoga*) in this life and the next. If we regain our real position then we have the chance of dissociating ourselves from the world. *Bhakti* is the eternal function of pure soul. If we regain our real position then we have the chance of dissociating ourselves from the world. [Devotional service is the pure function (*nirmala-vṛtti*) of the soul. Only by reviving our original consciousness (*prakṛta-svāsthya*) can we transcend Earthly existence.]

The seven tongues of the fire of *saṅkīrtana*

Let there be supreme victory for the chanting of the holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which cleanses the mirror of the heart and completely extinguishes the blazing forest fire of material existence. *Śrī kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana* diffuses the moon rays of *bhāva*, which cause the white lotus of good fortune for the *jīvas* to bloom. The holy name is the life and soul of transcendental knowledge, which is herein compared to a wife. It continuously expands the ocean of transcendental bliss, enabling one to taste complete nectar at every step, and thoroughly cleanses and cools everything, internal and external, including one's body, heart, self (*ātmā*) and nature. (*Śrī Śikṣaṣṭakam* 1)

The Vedic scriptures describe fire as having seven tongues, each of a different colour according to its intensity. The colours of these tongues are blackish (*karālī*), deep smoky purple (*dhumina*), white (*śveta*), red (*lohitā*), a mix of blue and red (*nīla-lohitā*), golden (*suvārṇa*) and reddish pink like a lotus (*padmarāga*). [From *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (1.2.4)] In the same way Śrī Gaurasundara has sung the glories of the fire of *saṅkīrtana*, which also has seven tongues. They are *ceto-darpaṇa-mārjana* and so forth. Unless the fire of *saṅkīrtana* is kindled and blazes, one's material existence will not be destroyed at the root, and salvation's highest goal, *prema*, will never be achieved.

Śrī Gaurasundara describes the fire of *saṅkīrtana*'s seven tongues using seven similes. He likens (1) the heart to a mirror, (2) material existence to a great forest-fire, (3) spiritual welfare to moonlight, or the brightness of the moon, (4) knowledge to a bride, (5) bliss to the ocean, (6) *prema* to ambrosia and (7) the attainment of service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa to a bath in which one fully immerses oneself. The adverb *prati-padam* (at every step) is used before each of these seven adjectives, which describe *saṅkīrtana*.

Instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda

(1) The statement written in the *Śikṣāṣṭaka* of Śrīman Mahāprabhu: *Param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam* —“Supreme victory to the congregational chanting of Kṛṣṇa’s names” is the Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha’s sole object of worship.

(2) Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the *viśaya-vigraha*, the object of the devotee’s *prema*, is the sole enjoyer, and all others are to be enjoyed by Him.

(3) Those who do not perform *hari-bhajana* are ignorant and murderers of their own souls.

(4) Getting to learn tolerance is one of the main duties of persons residing in a monastery (*maṭha*).

(5) Śrī Rūpānuga *bhakta-gaṇa* (devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa who are followers of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī) never think or speak of their own power; rather, they give all credit and glory to the root cause of everything, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

(6) Chanting *śrī-hari-nāma* and direct realization of Bhagavān are one and the same.

(7) Those who engage in *pāñca miśāla* or *pañca-deva-upāsanā* (worship of five demigods) cannot serve Bhagavān.

Note: The impersonalists imagine the various demigods to be forms of the Lord. For example, the Māyāvādīs worship five demigods (*pañcopāsanā* or *pañca-deva-upāsanā*). They do not actually believe in the form of the Lord, but for the sake of worship they imagine some form to be God. Generally, they imagine a form of Viṣṇu, Śiva, Gaṇeśa, the sun-god, and Durgā. This is called *pañcopāsanā* or *pañca-deva-upāsanā*.

(8) Establishing a printing press to print devotional books, and preaching the glories of the holy name by organizing *nāma-haṭṭa* programs, constitutes genuine service to Śrī Māyāpura (the birthplace of Śrī Gaurahari).

(9) Everyone should perform *hari-sevā* (devotional service of Lord Hari) together and with one purpose.

(10) Wherever *hari-kathā* is being spoken is a holy

place (*tīrtha*, a place of pilgrimage).

(11) We are not doers of good or bad deeds, nor are we scholarly or illiterate. Carrying the shoes of Hari's pure and honest devotees, who are devoid of deceit, we are initiates into the *mantra* 'kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hari' ('Always chanting the names of Lord Hari as our duty').

(12) Without criticizing the nature of others, one should correct oneself—this is my personal instruction.

(13) The *nīti* (conduct, moral precepts, philosophy) of Śrīman Mahāprabhu does not contain *kṣatriya-nīti* (rules for the warrior class), *vaiśya-nīti* (rules for the mercantile class), *śudra-nīti* (rules for the working class), or *yavana-nīti* (rules for the meat-eaters). From the words that He preached, it can be understood that He adhered to the pinnacle of *ṛṣi-nīti* (the conceptions and regulations given by saints and sages).

(14) Serving the Vrajavāsīs, who felt great separation from Kṛṣṇa when He left Vraja to reside in Mathurā, is our supreme constitutional occupation (*parama-dharma*).

(15) A *mahā-bhāgavata* (great devotee of the Lord) sees his spiritual master (*guru*) everywhere. That is why, the *mahā-bhāgavata* is the only spiritual master for the whole world (*jagad-guru*).

(16) If I desire to follow an eternally auspicious course (*śreyah-patha* or *nitya-kalyāṇa-kārī mārga*) in life, I must hear only *śrauta-vāṇī* (instructions from a transcendental source—the timeless, divine words of the *ācāryas*), disregarding the theories of even countless people.

(17) It is appropriate that one likes the *śreyah-vastu* (object that is eternally auspicious, *nitya-maṅgala-maya*).

(18) The confidential devotee (*antaraṅga-bhakta*) has no other desire than to render service to the sincere followers of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī (*rūpānuga-jana*).

(19) In order to follow the order of the Vaiṣṇava spiritual master, if I have to become a *dāmbhika* (cheat or hypocrite) or animal, or have to stay in hell for eternity,

then I will do so. I shall drive away the opinions of the whole world with the blow of my fist, through the power of the lotus feet of the spiritual master (*śrī-guru-pāda-padma*). I am such a proud hypocrite and cheat.

(20) Other than the ear which submissively listens to *hari-kathā*, there is no means of realizing the *nirguṇa-vastu* (transcendental absolute truth which is above the three modes of material nature).

(21) The very moment we do not have a guardian, all the objects in our proximity will become enemies and attack us. The *hari-kathā* (narrations of pastimes of Lord Hari) of an honest, sincere saintly person (*saccā-sādhū*) is our only guardian.

(22) One who flatters is not a spiritual master (*guru*) or preacher (*pracāraka*).

(23) Life as an animal, bird, insect, *paṭaṅga* (flying insect such as a moth), or any other of the countless species is acceptable, but taking shelter of deceit is thoroughly improper. Only an honest person possesses real auspiciousness.

(24) Another name for *saralāṭā* (honesty and simplicity) is *vaiṣṇavatā* (the quality of being a Vaiṣṇava). Paramahaṁsa Vaiṣṇava-dāsa-gaṇa (the exalted swan-like servants of Vaiṣṇavas) are *sarala* (honest and simple by nature); therefore, only they are the best among the *brāhmaṇas*.

(25) Helping to draw conditioned souls away from their perverted attachment to the material energy is the greatest compassion. If even one soul is rescued from *mahā-māyā's* (the great illusory potency's) fortress, that compassionate act is infinitely more benevolent than the construction of unlimited hospitals.

(26) Every selfless, merciful member of Gauḍīya Maṭha must remain ready to spend two-hundred gallons of blood in order to nourish the spiritual body of every member of human society.

(27) Every single penny of the money collected by the servants of Gauḍīya Maṭha, by working assiduously

day and night, is spent on stopping the tendency of enjoying the material world and is spent only on activities that bring transcendental pleasure to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's senses.

(28) Even if one very much likes it, one must abandon the association of persons whose propensity to always render service to Bhagavān in the company of self-realized souls has yet to awaken.

(29) Preaching (*pracāra*) without proper conduct falls within the category of *karma*, mundane activity.

(30) Our monastery (*maṭha*) has not been established to add fuel to the sense enjoyment (*bhogas*) of the sense gratifiers (*bhogīs*) and follow clever ideas from discussions of philosophical speculators (*jñānīs*). It is not our goal to consider charity of one or two rupees to be benevolent to the monastery. Only by receiving favor can one render service to the *kṛṣṇa-sevā-maya maṭha* (monastery meant for the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa).

(31) Śrī Bhakti-vinoda Ṭhākura jī has introduced himself as a sweeper in *śrī-nāma-haṭṭa* (the market-place of the holy name) and has thus revealed the transcendental pastimes (*aprākṛta-līlā*). It is befitting that we become instruments in his service of cleansing the material world. Hundreds of people like us should follow in the footsteps of the great personalities (*mahājana-anugamana*) and abandon the association of non-devotees (*bahirmukha-saṅga-parityāga*). Although such behavior of ours may not be palatable to everyone, it will bring real benefit to us.

(32) By rendering service to Bhagavān and devotees, a householder's attachment to family life—home, family, wife, children, and so on (*grha-vrata-dharma*)—is slackened.

(33) Our main and original disease is collecting objects for our sense gratification, not for that of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

(34) We have not come to this world to become artisans and workers who work with and carve wood and stone. We are only propagators of the teachings of Śrī Caitanya-deva.

(35) We will not remain in this world for long, and by profusely performing *hari-kīrtana*, upon relinquishing these material bodies we will experience the ultimate reward of embodied life.

(36) The dust of the lotus feet of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, the fulfiller of Śrī Caitanyadeva's inner desires, is our lives' sole desired object.

(37) Only after hundreds of births or even millenniums can one understand the very confidential truth behind the words of a preacher who fearlessly speaks the absolute truth without any expectation of material gain. Such a preacher must spend hundreds of gallons of blood to explain the truth to even one person.

(38) Bhagavān will not accept anything which is offered by a person who does not chant *harināma* one-hundred-thousand times daily.

(39) One will never receive the great fortune of becoming a maidservant of Śrī Rādhājī while in the conditioned state of having *anarthas* (unwanted habits and desires for various types of sense gratification). Those who discuss *aprākṛta-līlās* (transcendental pastimes) of Śrī Rādhārāṇī, the *parama-śreṣṭha-sevikā* (best of the maidservants of Śrī Kṛṣṇa), while in *anartha-yukta* and *anādhikāri-avasthā* (the unqualified state of being full of unwanted habits and desires for sense gratification), are indeed *indriyārāmī* (desirous of enjoying sense gratification), *pracchanna-bhogī* (covered or hidden sense gratifiers), and *prākṛta-sahajiyā* (imitators).

Note: *Prākṛta-sahajiyās* are those who think that the *aprākṛta* (spiritual) *līlā* of *aprākṛta* Bhagavān is *prākṛta* (mundane) like the affairs of ordinary men and women, and that *aprākṛta-tattva* is attained by material *sādhana*.

(40) While chanting Śrī Nāma (the holy name of Lord Hari) when one's unwanted habits are removed, one will automatically receive a *sphūrti* (revelation) of the form (*rūpa*), qualities (*guṇa*), and pastimes (*līlā*) of Lord Hari. One should not try to remember such form, qualities, and pastimes artificially by one's own endeavor alone.

(41) Pretending to be initiated and actually attaining divine knowledge are two different things. [Taking formal initiation (*dīkṣā*) and actually attaining transcendental knowledge (*divya-jñāna*) are not the same.]

(42) Only persons who serve Bhagavān are indeed blessed. In spite of all inconvenience, suffering, and sorrow, one should keep on hearing, glorifying, and remembering narrations of Bhagavān's pastimes.

(43) Śrī Gurudeva is an exclusive, unalloyed servant of Bhagavān. His every activity is a perfect model of devotional service to Bhagavān. As long as I do not have such a vision of Gurudeva, my eyes shall remain blindfolded. By not attaining his mercy, not attaining divine knowledge, we cannot understand the glory of *guru-pāda-padma* (the lotus feet of the spiritual master).

(44) It is not true that one will be able to render service to Bhagavān only if one has money. The activities of devotional service to Bhagavān will be accomplished if one has unflinching desire (*nirbandhinī-matī*), resolute determination (*dr̥ḍha-saṅkalpa*), and service attitude devoid of pretense or duplicity (*akapaṭa-sevāmaya-prāṇa*). You should not worry about money. It is not possible to maintain a *maṭha* (monastery) only by wealth or money. It is the nature of the sense objects to indulge a person who is not engaged in *hari-sevā* (devotional service to Lord Hari) in enjoyment of those sense objects.

(45) One will not attain liberation by studying Vedānta for an entire lifetime, or even for eternity. One will not achieve auspiciousness by holding one's breath for eternity or by levitating one's body ten or twenty arm-lengths above the ground. Everyone in the world will certainly attain auspiciousness if they hear narrations of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from the mouth of devotees who are *bhāgavata-svarūpa* (the personification of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*).

**Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare**

Śrī Prabhupāda-padma-stavakaḥ
Prayer to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī
Prabhupāda's Lotus Feet

(Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja)

sujanārbuda-rādhita-pāda-yugaṁ
yuga-dharma-dhurandhara-pātra-varam
varadābhaya-dāyaka-pūjya-padaṁ
praṇamāmi sadā prabhupāda-padam (1)

O Śrīla Prabhupāda, your beautiful lotus feet are cherished by millions and millions of the purest and most qualified devotees, and you are the most competent personality to preach the recognized process for this era. Your sacred lotus feet are adorable, as they openly grant fearlessness and bestow the highest benediction to all living entities. I eternally offer my respects unto that charming effulgence that shines forth from the radiant lotus toe-tips of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda.

bhajanorjjita-sajjana-saṅgha-patim
patitādhika-kāruṇikaika-gatim
gati-vañcita-vañcakācintya-padaṁ
praṇamāmi sadā prabhupāda-padam (2)

You shine forth as the natural leading monarch among the highest class of devotees due to your immensely powerful *bhajana*, and you are the exclusive, ultimate aim of the truly fallen due to your far-reaching merciful embrace. Your inconceivable lotus feet bestow full shelter for the cheaters and the

cheated.

ati-komala-kāñcana-dīrgha-tanuṁ
tanu-nindita-hema-mṛnāla-madam
madanārbuda-vandita-candra-padaṁ
praṇamāmi sadā prabhupāda-padam (3)

Your divine figure is so graceful and delicate, your skin so soft, and your towering form so radiant and golden. Your overwhelmingly beautiful appearance mocks the pride of golden lotus stems as countless Cupids offer their humble respects to your lotus toes which are like glowing white petals of the radiant moon.

***vipulī-kṛta-vaibhava-gaura-bhuvam
bhuvaneṣu vikīrtita-gaura-dayam
dayanīya-gaṇārpita-gaura-padam
praṇamāmi sadā prabhupāda-padam (5)***

You have widely spread the glories of Śrī Gaurāṅga's holy abode, Śrī Māyāpura-dhāma, and you have openly declared the nature of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mercy throughout the universe. Your graceful personality has planted the lotus of Gaurāṅga's holy feet in the hearts of your deserving servitors.

***cira-gaura-janāśraya-viśva-gurum
guru-gaura-kiśoraka-dāsyā-param
paramāḍṛta-bhakti-vinoda-padam
praṇamāmi sadā prabhupāda-padam (6)***

As the universal holy master, you are the eternal refuge for Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's devotees. You are always dedicated to serving your holy master Śrīla Gaura-kiśora, and you are the abode of utmost honor for Śrīla Bhaktivinoda.

***raghu-rūpa-sanātana-kīrti-dharam
dharaṇī-tala-kīrtita-jīva-kavim
kavirāja-narottama-sakhya-padam
praṇamāmi sadā prabhupāda-padam (7)***

The intense magnitude of your devotion allows you a glorious position within that intimate group of Raghunātha dāsa, Sanātana, and Rūpa Gosvāmīs. Your happy and elevated philosophical conceptions have crowned and seated you along with that esteemed personality, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī. And you share friendly relations with Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja and Narottama dāsa, being as dear to them as their very own lives.

***vṛṣabhānu-sutā-dayitānucaram
caraṇāśrita-reṇu-dharas tam aham
mahad-adbhuta-pāvana-śakti-padam
praṇamāmi sadā prabhupāda-padam (11)***

Since you are an exclusive servitor of Vṛṣabhānu-nandinī Śrīmatī Rādhikā, my bold aspiration is to take full shelter as a minute atomic particle of that shining dust that clings to your beautiful lotus feet. Your wonderful *śakti* can deliver the whole world. I eternally offer my respects unto that charming effulgence that shines forth from the radiant lotus toe-tips of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda!